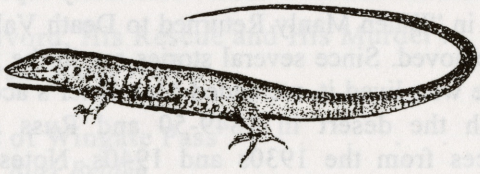
Death Valley Tales

Chapters from the drama-crammed past of the Death Valley National Park

Death Valley Tales



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Death Valley '49ers, Inc.

Preface

New information has come to light since 1955 when seven of these tales were first printed. Three stories have been replaced. "Hungry Bill Talks" was removed because it is a work of fiction whereas the other stories are true. The story of the 1849ers in Death Valley has received a great deal of research since 1955, and rather than adding notes to make corrections, we replaced "When Death Valley Took Its First Toll" with the story of John Rogers, which covers the same material. "Charles Alvord, his Rescue and his Murder" essentially repeats much of the material in "When Manly Returned to Death Valley," so the latter was removed. Since several stories are in the first person, told by those who lived it, we added Mrs. Brier's account of her trek through the desert in 1849-50 and Russ Journigan's remembrances from the 1930s and 1940s. Notes and introductions were prepared by LeRoy and Jean Johnson.

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John Rogers, Death Valley's Unsung Hero of 1849

JEAN AND LEROY JOHNSON

Reprinted from the Death Valley '49ers. Inc. Keepsake No. 39.

Jimble Jaw was one stubborn mule, but Big John Rogers was one stubborn man. In 1885, Tom Givens, who grew up near Merced, remembered the old pioneer and Death Valley '49er:

> I was only seven years old then, but I can remember Rogers and that mule. Father called her Jimble Jaw.... Her upper teeth overhung and never wore down, so they grew out to great length. Once a blacksmith cut them off with a hacksaw. Well, that old mule was a good saddle animal, but she had a rawhide mouth and an iron neck. Rogers was helping Father gather hogs.... The mule wanted to go on one side of a chaparral and Rogers wanted to go on the other side. The mule had an iron neck all right, but Big John had iron arms. He heaved on the reins and they compromised by piling up in the middle of that chaparral so tight that father had to put his reata on them and pull them out.[1]

One hundred years after John Rogers walked into Death Valley—and walked out as one of the heros of the Death Valley '49er saga—historian Frank Latta searched the Merced area for traces of John's life after his desert trek, and he found John Flannagan, another old timer who remembered Rogers:

> Yes, I knew Big John Rogers for many years. He was as fine an old pioneer as ever lived. He was a lonely old fellow, an old bachelor as long as I knew him, and I am certain that he had never been married. He was a '49er and had been connected with the Death Valley party, but I never knew him to more than mention it in speaking of the early days.... He was a big, powerful man,... as tall as six feet two or three inches, and he weighed more than two hundred pounds when I knew him. In spite of his crippled feet he

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[1] Frank Latta, *Death Valley '49ers.* Bear State Books, 1979, p. 344.

> would do a long day of hard, heavy work as well as anyone.... I never knew of him to drink at all. He was a kind, generous old fellow and a square shooter if there ever was one."[2]

John Rogers was a burly man from Tennessee, a quiet, gentle man with a dark complexion and brown eyes. Lewis Manly, his partner through the desert, said, "he has a heart as big as the oxen we picked the bones of on the Desert."[3]

Elusive in written history, John Rogers deserves the recognition and praise of all who celebrate the best of California's history and the determination of the emigrants who entered Death Valley in December 1849 and gave it its name.

John Haney Rogers and William Lewis Manly were equally heroic in their successful rescue of the Bennett and Arcan families from Death Valley in early 1850, having struggled into the valley in late 1849.[4] But because Manly had his chronicles published monthly for three years in the late 1880s and also wrote a book about his sojourn to the California gold fields, we know a lot about Manly, but we know very little about John Rogers. Most of what we do know about him comes from Manly's book and magazine articles.

Although Rogers and Manly were physically a study in contrasts, both held the values that made California a great state—self reliance, physical strength, determination, dedication, compassion, trust, honesty. These qualities were exemplified in their selfless act of hiking over 500 miles out of and back into the desert to keep their promise to rescue the two starving families awaiting their return. It is one of the classic stories of the American West.

Rogers was big, tall, and dark; whereas, the census records reveal that Manly stood 5 feet 7 or 8 inches tall. A neighbor who knew Manly as an old man said he was "a small man, about 5 feet 4 inches in height, bent over and walking with a manzanita cane held in a palsied hand, palm outward. His eye was clear and

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[2] Ibid. p. 345.

[3] Manly to Clay, Jan. 15, 1895. Letter. JA 647 Jayhawker Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

[4] Manly spelled the name Arcane in his accounts, but the family tombstones have the Arcan spelling.

keen with a snow-white beard and his mind was like a basket, filled only with the events of his trip through Death Valley."[5]

During their desert trek, both Rogers and Manly wasted away to little more than skin and bones. John Colton, a young Jayhawker who also crossed Death Valley in 1849, said that when Manly "found our trail, and came into our camp, trying to get out [of the desert], and get succor for the women and little children, he was a skeleton, but did not look older than 25 years, but he had the nerve of a catamount."

We know nothing about John Rogers' life before 1849 except Manly's comment that he was a capable butcher and hailed from Tennessee. He was about 26 when he ventured to California where he remained after his harrowing trek through the desert.

John began his migration to the California gold country as a wagon driver for a man named Dallas, and when the train reached the Missouri River, Manly also hired on as a teamster. Manly was supposed to have traveled with Asabel Bennett and his family from southwest Wisconsin, but Manly had gone up the Mississippi River to find a suitable Indian pony for traveling, and when he returned, the Bennetts had already departed taking all of Manly's gear with them.

After crossing the Rocky Mountains, Mr. Dallas announced he would set the men adrift in Salt Lake City to fend for themselves all winter. After considerable discussion, seven of the men decided to navigate the Green River to the Pacific Ocean. As ridiculous and reckless as this decision may seem to those who have traveled the west, their decision was based on information they had at hand in 1849 as well as on faith in their own abilities. These emigrants had seen the government-published maps of Frémont's expeditions, which clearly showed the Green and Colorado rivers as the main arteries of the west, and they were familiar with the navigable, placid, rivers of the east. They had just crossed the dreaded Rocky Mountains via South Pass and found them benign and unthreatening. Based on their own experience, (and the discovery of a sunken boat in the

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[5] Lawrence Clark Powell. *California Classics*. Los Angeles: Ward Richie Press, 1971, p. 42.

Green River), it seemed perfectly logical to float to the Pacific Ocean.

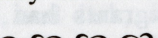
Manly was elected captain of the group due to his extensive wilderness experience and excellent hunting skills. At one point on the river trip, Rogers butchered an enormous elk that Manly shot. The antlers were so large that with the tips stuck in the ground, the men could walk under the skull.

After an exciting but nearly disastrous trip down the turbulent Green River, the voyagers encountered the Ute chief Walkara who explained with sign language that they would perish if they continued down the Colorado River. Rogers, Manly, and three others took the chief's advice, purchased two young horses from him, and hiked cross-country toward Salt Lake City.

Rogers and Manly grew to respect one another as their strengths and weaknesses were exposed during their trials on the Green River trip and cross-country trek.

At Hobble Creek, 45 miles south of Salt Lake City, the men came across a large rendezvous of wagons preparing to travel south into California via part of the Old Spanish Trail. In this train Manly was astonished to find the Bennett family, his friends from Wisconsin, whom he was supposed to have met at the Missouri River several months before.

This put Manly in the rare position of having fresh clothing and money when most travelers had worn out or spent what they had with them. Manly joined the Bennetts and asked that John Rogers travel with them also. Feeling well off, Manly turned over his money to the remaining three Green River companions who had come cross-country with him.



While on the trail west from the Missouri River, the Bennett family (Asabel, Sarah, and their three young children George (8), Melissa (7), and Martha (2)) met the Arcan family (John, Abigail, and little Charley (2)). The year had advanced to October when they finally reached Salt Lake City, and there was general concern that the emigrants would be caught in the Sierra Nevada snows that decimated the Donner party two years before. However, members of the Mormon Battalion had recently

brought a single wagon from Los Angeles northward to Salt Lake, and a Mormon elder, Jefferson Hunt, a captain in the Battalion who had traversed the trail twice, agreed to lead a train back on that route. He warned the travelers about the long, dry trail and that they might lose some of their animals.

As often happened in large trains, dissension broke out after a few weeks on the trail. When a map of a purportedly shorter route to the gold fields appeared, most of the emigrants decided to try this route even though none of them had been over the ground or knew anything about the route.

When their forward progress was halted by a deep chasm southwest of today's Enterprise, Utah, most of the emigrants turned their wagons back to the Old Spanish Trail and followed Captain Hunt through to Los Angeles.

The four wagons of the Bennett and Arcan families were among the 27 or so wagons that continued west into the unknown desert—today's Great Basin.

Because Manly had no specific duties, he scouted ahead for water, Indians, and the general lay of the land—often accompanied by Rogers. The farther they traveled the harsher the landscape. After one scouting trip Manly returned to say that the country ahead looked bleak, and it would be another month before they saw any part of California. As it turned out, Manly had been optimistic. Late that night, Sarah Bennett sobbed with despair and told her husband "she felt that she and the children must starve" before they could get out of the desert.[6] On another occasion, someone stole scarce pieces of meat from their stew pot.

Day after day Sarah Bennett and Abigail Arcan "were nearly crazy, for they expected the children would choke with thirst and die in their arms, and would rather perish themselves than suffer the agony of seeing their little ones gasp and slowly die.... For the love of gold they had left homes where hunger had never come." Upon returning from another scouting trip, "there was great gladness when John Rogers and I appeared in the camp and

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[6] Unless otherwise noted, quotations are from William Lewis Manly's book *Death Valley in '49*, 1894 or from his 1887-1889 serialized account in *Escape from Death Valley,* 1987, edited by LeRoy and Jean Johnson.

gave the mothers full canteens of water for themselves and little ones, and there were tears of joy and thankfulness upon their cheeks as they blessed us over and over again."

Oxen that had been fattened, rested, and shod at Hobble Creek began to weaken. They "fared very hard ... and seemed hardly able to drag along.... They moved slowly and cropped disdainfully the dry scattering shrubs and bunches of grass.... Spending many nights and days on such dry food and without water they suffered fearfully.... No one knew how long before we might have to kill some of them to get food to save our own lives." It wasn't long. "Our animals were so poor that one would not last long as food. No fat could be found on the entire carcass, and the marrow of the great bones was a thick liquid, streaked with blood resembling corruption." By the time the emigrants reached Death Valley, the oxen had worn out or lost their shoes, and the men made booties for them from the green hide of their fallen brethren.

After all the company stumbled into Death Valley (some sooner than others), Manly ventured 20 miles north to see how the Jayhawkers, Georgia-Mississippi boys, and others were faring. He found them slaughtering their oxen and burning the remaining wagons to reduce the poor meat to jerky.

On his way back to his small train of seven wagons, Manly succinctly stated his (and John Rogers') situation:

> If I were alone, with no one to expect me to help them, I would be out before any other man, but with women and children in the party, to go and leave them would be to pile everlasting infamy on my head. The thought almost made me crazy but I thought it would be better to stay and die with them, bravely struggling to escape than to forsake them in their weakness.

Mr. Fish, Isham, and a couple of men traveling with them parted from the Bennett-Arcan party to join the northern contingent and follow the Jayhawkers. As the Bennett-Arcan party headed south in Death Valley hoping to find a pass over the mountains for their wagons, the four teamsters decided to leave the families and also follow the Jayhawkers.

After an abortive attempt to cross what several men thought was the Sierra Nevada (really the Panamint Range) the Bennett-Arcan train congregated around a small well of water to discuss

their plight. (This was about seven miles south of Bennetts Well.) The gathering included the Bennett and Arcan families, the Wade family, and several loosely associated men such as Nusbaumer, Hadapp, the Earhart brothers, and Captain Culverwell (whose death inspired the naming of Death Valley).

Bennett said, "I propose that we select two of our youngest, strongest men and ask them to take some food and go ahead on foot to try to seek a settlement.... I will take Lewis if he will consent to go ... [because] he would come back if he lived." The next man chosen was John Rogers, who also consented to go.

An ox was killed and its meat dried. They "packed seven-eighths of all the flesh of an ox " (Rogers said it was 21 pounds), and added a "couple of spoonfulls of rice and about as much tea." Rogers wore a thin summer coat but had no blanket. Manly took a light blanket but no coat or vest. Each had a tin cup and a small camp kettle that held about a quart. Rogers took a good double barreled shot gun and Manly had Bennett's rifle, the stock of his own having been broken a couple days before. Each carried a knife and wore a small-brimmed hat that would be inconspicuous to possible Indian scouts.

It was a sad parting, and the general opinion was, "If those boys ever get out of this cussed hole, they are d—d fools if they ever come back to help anybody."

Over the next two weeks, all the men in camp, except the Bennett and Arcan families, lost faith that the boys would ever return. They packed up and followed the Wades south, knowing that their only remaining food was on the hoof, and if they remained, they would eat the oxen and then starve to death.

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When Rogers and Manly reached the summit of the Panamints, where they hoped to see into the rich San Joaquin Valley, they were overcome with crushing disappointment as the view exposed more mountain ranges with deserts between. As they looked back where they had traveled for so many weeks Rogers said, "Just look at the cursed country we have come over."

On their way down the steep western side of the Panamints they found enough water to drink and fill their canteens, but this was the last potable water they were to find for 3 days! "We

seemed almost perishing for want of water, the hard exercise made us perspire so freely." They saw a stream in Panamint Valley and hurried to it "but the tempting fluid was as salt as brine and made our thirst all the more intolerable.... We had secured only two drinks since leaving camp.... We tried to eat a little meat, but after chewing a long time, the mouth would not moisten it enough so we could swallow, and we had to reject it. It seemed as if we were going to die with plenty of food in our hand, because we could not eat it."

They crossed the Slate Range via today's Manly Pass, and then the Argus Range west of Trona and entered Indian Wells Valley as the sun rose after a frigid night. The nearest sign of water was snow to the north, so they headed toward it, "and it was quite a question if we could live long enough to make the distance." Soon Rogers "found a little ice that had frozen under the clear sky. It was not thicker than window glass.... We gathered just a kettle full, besides what we ate as we were gathering." With this melted ice, they cooked some of their poor, jerked beef and returned to their trek southwest across Indian Wells Valley.

Rogers and Manly overtook the Jayhawkers camped at a fine spring found at today's Homestead on highway 395.

Since Walkers Pass was closed with snow, Rogers and Manly headed south to the Mojave Desert through Last Chance Canyon (where they found another contingent of Jayhawkers), and followed the Indian Horse-Thief Trail to Desert Springs. The trail led south into what is now Edwards Air Force Base where providence again provided playas with a thin layer of water. Along the way they found "the bones of animals, some badly decayed and some well preserved. All the heads were those of horses.... It was evident they had not been killed but had dropped along the way. It was a dreary trail at best, and these evidences of death did not help to brighten it in the least."

They crossed Soledad Pass on hard packed snow, and near Acton found "a beautiful little running brook of clear pure water, singing as it danced over the stones." Here they ate the birds Rogers shot—a quail: "as superb a morsel as ever a man did eat," a hawk: "pretty fair and quite good eating," and a crow: "his flesh was about as black as his feathers and full of tough and

bony sinews.... I have heard people talk of 'eating crow' as a bitter pill; I think I know all about it from experience."

When they camped in Soledad Canyon, the coyotes slunk around them: "They would all go to howling, [and] Rogers would wake up and say, 'Shoot the cursed things!'" John was not afraid of coyotes slinking "twenty feet [from] our fire." He was a man who wanted a good night's sleep!

Rogers refused to leave Manly when Manly became lame as they forced their way through the brush down Soledad Canyon. Manly said they "had to stop and rest quite often. After a while I told Rogers he had better go on and I would follow just as I could. He refused to go, saying, 'We will either die or go together.' By the next morning I was some better and was able to hobble along."

Rogers and Manly were able to buy supplies and two horses from the Del Valle rancho (near today's Saugus). They procured a sack of yellow beans, a small amount of wheat, some good quality dried meat, and a few pounds of coarse, unbolted flour that the boys ground for themselves. As they started to leave, the lady of the house brought out four oranges and "pointed to her own child and then to the East, put them in the pack meaning we should carry them to the children."

On their hurried return to Death Valley, Rogers and Manly crossed the San Gabriel Mountains through San Francisquito Canyon where they came across some road builders, who gave the boys 25 pounds of unbolted wheat flour and sold them a poor little one-eyed mule and a white mare.

> This little beauty of a beast was broken to lead at halter, but had not been broken in any other way. Rogers said he would ride her where he could, and before she got to the wagons she would be as gentle as a lamb. He got a bridle and tried her at once, and then there was a scene of rearing, jumping and kicking that would have made a good Buffalo Bill circus in these days. No use, the man could not be thrown off, and the crowd cheered and shouted to Rogers to "Hold her level." [Finally,] the little beast yielded the point, and carried her load without further trouble.

When Rogers and Manly returned to Searles Valley (north of Trona), they turned aside from their eastern course to pay final respects to one of their fallen comrades, Mr. Isham, who had crawled miles on hands and knees toward Searles Lake before he

perished never knowing it offered not a single drinkable drop. Then they passed the body of Mr. Fish who died in the Slate Range east of Searles Valley. The Jayhawkers told them of these deaths when they camped together two and a half weeks before.

Now they faced a dilemma: cross the Panamint Range directly before them or go far north and follow the much longer Jayhawker trail over the mountains. Their return was already overdue, and they feared the families may have despaired and left the valley without them. They had no time to spare; their choice must be to cross the mountain before them. But the sacrifice was great. The horses could not climb the first dry fall in Redlands Canyon and sadly had to be left behind.

Could they get the little one-eyed mule over another formidable dry fall? They found a narrow shelve that wound its way high on the southern cliff wall. Manly was so nearly in despair that he could not help bursting into tears, but "finally Rogers said, 'Come Lewis' and I gently pulled the rope, calling the little animal to make a trial."

> Carefully and steadily she went along, selecting a place before putting down a foot, and when she came to the narrow ledge leaned gently on the rope, never making a sudden start or jump, but cautiously as a cat moved slowly along.... Another step or two, when calculating the distance closely she made a spring and landed on a smooth bit of sloping rock below that led up to the highest crest of the precipice, and safely climbed to the top, safe and sound above the falls.

The little mule was fortunate she made it, since Manly "saw Rogers with a very large stone in his hand, ready to holler" should she falter. She carried the remaining wheat and flour and nibbled at anything growing along the way.

After they reached the floor of Death Valley, Rogers suddenly stopped, staring at the ground. "Here is Capt. Culverwell, dead." They wondered how many more bodies might they find? They were still several miles from the camp (Eagle Borax) where they expected the families to return to 25 days before.

Finally they saw the wagons but saw no movement of any kind; they fired their guns as a signal, and to their overwhelming relief figures emerged from the shade of the wagons.

Now that Manly and Rogers had traversed 500 miles of desert, mostly on foot and with a sense of urgency every step of the way, they had to turn around and lead the families over the same rugged ground to safety.

The trials the families suffered are best left told by Manly. In summary, Rogers and Manly dealt with the oxen, often pushed ahead to prepare the night's camp, slaughtered an ox, prepared the dinner, and made booties for everyone including the remaining oxen.

Asabel Bennett and John Arcan helped Sarah and Abigail and the children. Abigail was by this time five months pregnant.[7] Little Martha, only two years old had come close to dying while in Death Valley, and she could no longer walk. Little Charley Arcan, also two, rode in the other pocket slung over the back of Old Crump, a steady ox with a bent horn. Rogers relates that:

> I got tired packing the babies so I took a long sack and fixed it so that it could be fastened on the ox. A hole was cut on each side like a pair of saddlebags and a baby was placed in each end. The little fellows would ride thus and sleep half of their time.

A few quotes from Manly gives a feeling for their intense suffering:

> The mothers ... picked out soft places on which to place their poor blistered feet at every step. They walked as if they were troubled with corns on every toe and on their heels into the bargain, and each foot was so badly affected, that they did not know on which one to limp.
>
> The women were so tired they were over two hours late.... When they reached the beds they fell at full length on them, saying their feet and limbs ached like a toothache.
>
> Little Charley Arcane cried bitterly all day [with a horrible rash] and almost all night.
>
> One of the women held up her foot and the sole was bare and blistered.... The women had left their combs in the wagons, and their hair was getting seriously tangled. Their dresses were getting worn off pretty nearly to their knees.... They were in a sad condition so far as toilet and raiment were concerned."

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[7] LeRoy and Jean Johnson, *Julia, Death Valley's Youngest Victim.* 2nd edition 1996.

> [During a snow storm] we laid down as close as pigs in cold weather, and covered up as best we could but did not keep dry, and morning found us wet to the skin, cold and shivering.
>
> For breakfast in the morning we had only dried meat roasted before the fire, without water, and when we started each one put a piece in his or her pocket to chew on during the day as we walked along ... seeing not a rabbit, bird, or living thing we could use for food.

One can only imagine the relief the party felt as they emerged from brushy Soledad Canyon into the open and greening valley where Saugus and Newhall now sprawl. As Manly said, "I cannot half tell how we felt and acted, nor what we said in our delight over this picture of plenty. The strong contrasts created strong impressions, and the tongues so long silent in our dry and dreary trouble were loosened to say everything the heart inspired. Think as much as you can; you cannot think it all."

Rogers and Manly went with the Bennetts to the Pueblo de Los Angeles after the Arcans traded their two remaining oxen for guidance to the seaport of San Pedro where they hoped to get passage to San Francisco. As a token of his thankfulness for saving the lives of his family, John Arcan gave Rogers his silver watch and to Manly he gave a gold ring and his share in the little one-eyed mule.

After arriving at Los Angeles, John stayed with the Bennett family to help with the teams as they made their way north to the gold mines while Manly stayed in Los Angeles to work a short time for the Briers. (The Brier family followed the Jayhawkers north in Death Valley and arrived at the Del Valle rancho about a month before the Bennett and Arcan families. They ran a hotel in Los Angeles for a short time.) John mined up and down the Mother Lode before settling in Merced.

In 1853, Sarah and Asabel Bennett had another son, their fourth child, whom they named John Rogers Bennett in honor of the big man they so highly respected. Manly saw Rogers on a steamboat at Benicia in 1854, and apparently Rogers returned to the Merced area and remained there most of his life, although his obituary hints that he may have been the city marshal of Gilroy at one time.

John owned 80 acres southwest of Merced that almost touched the San Joaquin River. That area is now covered with cotton fields and other row crops. On April 13, 1868, John recorded the sale of his 80 acres for the sum of "One Hundred and Fifty Dollars, in Gold Coin of the United States of America."

Frank Latta quotes his conversations with John Flanagan (84 years old in 1941), who knew Rogers after 1880. Flanagan had high praise for the old pioneer and added the following:

> Rogers had been salivated in the mines by breathing mercury fumes while retorting amalgam. Both of his feet were cut off at the instep. But that did not keep him from making a living. He was an excellent separator man. He tended separator on stationary threshing machines all over this country until they were replaced by combines.... Between harvest seasons he worked at carpentering or at any kind of mechanical work. He was a good mechanic. He always earned his way. He never sponged off anyone and he never accepted charity. He was a good butcher and used to slaughter for the Ellis family.[8]
>
> John Rogers lived with the Ellis family for a number of years. Once their old homestead shack burned. Old man Ellis had about a dozen children and had no money with which to rebuild. Well, Rogers helped Ellis get together some material and he built Ellis another house, one with a stick and mud chimney.

The Ellis acreage was at the corner of Chamberlain and Lone Tree roads southwest of Merced and about three miles southeast of Rogers' 80 acres. At the intersection of the two roads, a gnarled snag of the old lone tree still stands as a mute symbol of the pioneer who lived and worked so many years within its shadow.

Virgil Givens, a couple years older than his brother who remembered the mule story, knew Rogers as late as 1895. He told Latta:

> [Rogers] had a long beard and was badly stooped from long years of work in the mines and on the ranches about Merced and Mariposa. He was crippled....[His] feet bothered him as long as he lived.... Rogers worked for my

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[8] Frank Latta, Loc cit. [Note 1] p. 346.

father for many years, the last time about 1889 or 1890. He was a good worker and a most reliable man. He did not drink. At least he was never a drunkard, as I remember nothing about his ever drinking.

Rogers hurt one of his feet the last time he worked for Father. He was cutting a limb off a tree and was depending on jumping to the ground when it fell. As he jumped, his foot slipped and he landed on the stump of another tree. This badly injured one of his crippled feet and it was never strong again.

When Rogers left Father the last time, he went back to Ellis and stayed there a long time, doing chores. The last time I saw him he came to Father's and was still limping on the injured foot. He was on his way to a hospital; I believe it was the county hospital in Merced. I do not know what became of him.[9]

It is possible John was on his way to the hospital for such an operation after Virgil saw him last. John's obituary said "a portion of his right foot was also amputated" in addition to his having "lost a portion of his left leg because of mercurial poisoning."

On January 14, 1895, John sent a man to Lewis Manly's home in Santa Clara to let Manly know his Death Valley compadre was still alive. Big John Rogers, as he was called, invited Manly to visit him, and in June of that year Manly went by train to Merced for a reunion where he found that John "like myself was an old man with a hairy face and walked with a cane." Manly told the touching story of their reunion in an article for the *Pioneer*:[10]

On reaching the house, an old man hobbled out, supported by a heavy cane.... John looked me over, and after a short pause said, "Lewis, is this really you?" and I replied, "Yes, if you are John."... His eyes ran over as he grasped my hand the big tears rolling down his cheeks, for the lost was found....

For two days and nights, Rogers and I rehearsed the story of our journey to California.... We called to mind the

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[9] Ibid. p. 345.

[10] In: *The Jayhawkers' Oath*. Articles by William Lewis Manly edited by Arthur Woodward. p. 43 & 45. 1949.

tortuous trail, the trip up the Platte River and down the Green River canyon, across Salt Lake Valley, and into Death Valley, where many of our party died of thirst and hunger, and where John and I came near losing our own lives in an effort to save the women and children, which we accomplished....

Our reminiscences included a thousand and one incidents of the journey, many of them pathetic, others romantic, and some laughable.... We dwelt upon the narrow escapes we had from dying of thirst, drowning, starvation, and Indians, told of the strange characteristics of our companions—many noble, others not altogether so, but in that respect, more than an average.

Sad indeed were the recollections of our disaster in Death Valley, with women and children, and weak men, suffering for food and water, our wagons abandoned and our cattle perishing, with but little hope or prospect of obtaining relief.... Two days and nights were all too short for recalling all the interesting events of our eventful journey....

John H. Rogers, like many other pioneers, has not received the smiles of Dame Fortune, and says that he "will not need any pocket in his shroud, as he will take nothing with him," when he goes over the divide. He was one of California's pioneers who assisted to develop the country and it will matter little if he has failed to acquire wealth. Already he leans heavily upon his staff and moves about with difficulty. We are old men now.

The two old pioneers corresponded from time to time, and Manly wrote several times to Jayhawker John Colton that Rogers was well: "I had a letter from John H Rogers a few days ago he is still at Merced a poor old cripple."[11] In 1897, Manly wrote to Colton: "So a good humanitarian who helped save women & children from starvation in 49 deserves pleasanter days as he leans on his staff & wanders along on the bank of the dark river & I know if he gets thare first he will becken us over."[12] Manly commented in a letter written in January 1900 that John had just written to him: "I received his picture a few days ago it took me

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[11] Manly to Colton, Oct. 1895. Letter. JA 630 Jayhawker Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

[12] Manly to Colton, Jan. 15, 1897. Letter. JA 632 Jayhawker Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

some time [to] study over those early times & try & make the face of 41 years ago & now conform, youth & old age compared he writes me he thinks he is better looking tharn the picture he is called whare he lives big John Rogers."[13] It appears John still had his sense of humor.

On February 5, 1903, William Lewis Manly died of a heart attack after having been confined to a wheelchair for a couple of years due to a broken hip. About three years later, his Death Valley partner Big John became a resident of the county hospital at Merced. By this time John had lost the sight of one eye, and sight in the other was seriously deteriorating. We also know that despite the natural dementia often associated with that age and time, John had made careful plans and was lucid to the very end. He followed through on his plans, about which he had told others.

Toward the end of the year, John became seriously ill while living at the hospital, and on December 29, 1906, the last Saturday of the year, Big John Rogers died.

In his earlier letter to Manly, John had provided his own epitaph:

This respected pioneer "will not need any pocket in his shroud, as he will take nothing with him."

His sad obituary in the *Merced Evening Sun* on December 29, 1906, found by Ted Faye and Robert Ryan, tells John's final, shocking story.

JOHN ROGERS TIRES OF LIFE

ATTEMPTED SUICIDE FRIDAY AS A RESULT OF PHYSICAL INFIRMITIES

Overburdened with an abundance of physical ailments, John Rogers, a pioneer resident of this locality, slashed himself into ribbons with a razor at the county hospital yesterday in an attempt to end his troubles. He was found a few minutes after-ward rapidly bleeding to death. His neck was gashed in six different places, though the blade had

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[13] Manly to Colton, Nov. 15, 1898. Letter. JA 636 Jayhawker Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

failed to touch a vital part. The desperate man had also inflicted three wounds upon each of his arms at the elbow joints. County Physician Castle was promptly summoned and after staunching the flow of blood stitched the wounds. Rogers is not expected to live, though today he seems to be gaining strength.

The unfortunate man is 84 years of age and was one of the first inhabitants of this locality. About a year ago he was admitted to the county hospital and many times since then he has threatened to take his life. Rogers is an old time miner and in his younger days lost a portion of his left leg because of mercurial poisoning. A portion of his right foot was also amputated. The old man then lost one of his eyes, and to add to his troubles the sight of his other eye has of late been failing him. This fact preyed upon his mind and in conversation he often confided to his fellow sufferers at the hospital that as soon as he became totally blind he would commit suicide. Little attention was paid him, the statement being accredited to his wandering mind. David Matthews, the steward, how-ever, was informed of the threat and only yesterday searched the old man and his quarters for weapons. Only an old knife was found, which Rogers used to cut tobacco, and which was so dull that it would be almost impossible to cut any tougher substance with it. He was allowed to retain that. But Rogers had cunningly concealed a razor in some mysterious place and it was that instrument which he used with such terrible effect a short time afterward. The weapon was his own property and he had never intimated that he possessed it during all the time he had been in the hospital.

While the physician was sewing the wound the old man begged to be allowed to die, though afterward he expressed sorrow at his act. "Old man Rogers" is known all over the county. It is said that many years ago he was city marshal of Gilroy.

Later— Rogers died about 1 o'clock this afternoon.

Old John's sad death closed one of the most heroic chapters of the California Gold Rush.

Our Christmas Amid the Terrors of Death Valley

JULIETTE BRIER

Juliette Brier (Mrs. Rev. James W. Brier), with her husband and three young sons, was the only woman to travel with the single men—the Jayhawkers, the Georgia/Mississippi boys, and others—who turned north in Death Valley and crossed Towne Pass and walked to Los Angeles. She gave two newspaper interviews—first to the San Francisco Call, *December 25, 1898, and second to the San Francisco* Examiner, *February 24, 1901. The* Examiner *interview is quite short but adds information not given in the first article. Therefore, inserted in italics into the complete first interview is material from the second interview. The newspapers introduced Mrs. Brier as follows:*

In a cozy room at the edge of the town of Lodi lives Mrs. Julia Brier, with her son, Rev. J. W. Brier Jr., his wife and two sturdy grandchildren. A very bright, but modest, wee old lady, now in her eighty-fourth year, is the heroine of the famous Death Valley party. This is the first time since 1850 that she has spoken of that awful experience to a newspaper representative. *By her fortitude and indomitable determination, she gave heart to the men and did her share in the real work of surmounting the appalling obstacles that confronted them. Following is her story:*

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Our first serious trouble began when we arrived at a big lake [Groom Lake in southwestern Nevada]. Instead of water we found it to be merely glazed mud covered with shallow alkaline water. From here on food and water were scarce.

Three days later we reached a branch of Forty-Mile Canyon, where a foot of snow fell on us. Our cattle suffered much from cold. Finding that the oxen would carry packs well, the company loaded the necessaries on the cattle and burned everything with the wagons. It was a fatal step, as we were about 500 miles from Los Angeles, with only our feet to take us there. By pushing on

we crossed the bed of the Amargosa, passed the Funeral Mountain, and reached the head of Furnace Canyon [Furnace Creek Wash] on the rim of Death Valley.

I don't know how to tell you about our struggle through Death Valley in 1849-50 and the Christmas we spent amid its horrors. I never expected to say anything about it for a newspaper. I was the only woman in the party. Mr. Brier, and our three boys, Columbus, John and Kirke, the oldest being nine years, and the two young men, St. John and Patrick made up our "mess" as we called it. Looking back on the memory of it after all these years the horror of it still makes me shudder.

We reached the top of the divide between Death and Ash valleys, and, oh, what a desolate country we looked down into. The next morning we started down. The men said they could see what looked like springs in the valley. Mr. Brier was always ahead to explore and find water, so I was left with our three boys to help bring up the cattle. They expected to reach the springs in a few hours and the men pushed ahead. I was sick and weary, and the hope of a good camping place was all that kept me up. Poor little Kirke gave out and I carried him on my back, barely seeing where I was going, until he would say, "Mother, I can walk now." Poor little fellow! He would stumble on a little way over the salty marsh and sink down, crying, "I can't go any farther." Then I would carry him again, and soothe him as best I could.

Many times I felt I should faint, and as my strength departed I would sink on my knees. The boys would ask for water, but there was not a drop. Thus, we staggered on over the salty wastes, trying to keep the company in view and hoping at every step to come to the springs. Oh, such a day! If we had stopped I knew the men would come back at night for us, but I didn't want to be thought a drag or a hindrance.

Night came down and we lost all track of those ahead. I would get down on my knees and look in the star-light for the ox tracks and then we would stumble on. There was not a sound and I didn't know whether we would ever reach camp or not.

About midnight we came around a big rock and there was my husband at a small fire.

"Is this the camp?" I asked.

"No, it's six miles farther," he said.

I was ready to drop and Kirke was almost unconscious, moaning for a drink. Mr. Brier took him on his back and hastened to camp to save his little life. It was three o'clock Christmas morning when we reached the springs. I only wanted to sleep but my husband said I must eat and drink or I would never wake up. Oh, such a horrible day and night!

We found hot and cold springs there and washed and scrubbed and rested. That was a Christmas none could ever forget.

Music or singing? My, no. We were too far gone for that. Nobody spoke very much, but I know we were all thinking of home back East and all the cheer and good things there. Men would sit looking into the fire or stand gazing away silently over the mountains, and it was easy to read their thoughts. *Poor fellows! My dear little ones had no thought of Santa Claus that year. The ages of the children were nine, seven and five.* Having no other woman there, I felt lonesome at times, but I was glad, too, that no other was there to suffer.[1]

The men killed an ox, and we had a Christmas dinner of fresh meat, black coffee, and a very little bread. I had one small biscuit. You see we were on short rations then and didn't know how long we would have to make provisions last. We didn't know we were in California. Nobody knew what untold misery the morrow might bring, so there was no occasion for cheer.

Fred Carr said to me that night: "Don't you think you and the children had better remain here and let me send back for you?"

I knew what was in his mind. "No," I said, "I have never been a hindrance, I have never kept the company waiting, neither have my children, and every step I take will be towards California."

Then I was troubled no more. As the men gathered around their blazing camp fire they asked Mr. Brier to speak to them—to remind them of home—though they were thinking of home

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[1]Three other families entered Death Valley, but the Brier family did not travel with them. Sarah Bennett, Abigail Arcan, and Mary Wade, with their husbands and children, turned south in Death Valley.

fast enough anyway. So he made them a speech. It was a solemn gathering in a strange place.

So ended, I believe, the first Christmas ever celebrated in Death Valley.

The next morning the company moved on over the sand to—nobody knew where. One of the men ahead called out suddenly, "Wolf! Wolf!" and raised his rifle to shoot.

"My God, it's a man!" his companion cried. As the company came up we found the thing to be an aged Indian lying on his back and buried in the sand—save his head. He was blind, shriveled and bald and looked like a mummy. He must have been one hundred and fifty years old. The men dug him out and gave him water and food.

The poor fellow kept saying, "God bless pickaninnies!" Wherever had he learned that. His tribe must have fled ahead of us, and as he couldn't travel he was left to die.

When we reached the Jayhawkers' camp they were about to burn their wagons and pack their oxen to hurry along. That made us still gloomier, but none complained. The men realized that to stop or go back meant death, and they determined to struggle on while strength and life lasted, trusting tomorrow to bring them to the land of plenty. Then we struggled through the salty marsh for miles and miles. Oh, it was terrible. We would sink to our shoe tops and as water gave out we were nearly famished. I have heard since that Governor Blasdel of Nevada found our tracks there twelve years later and still encrusted in the hardened salt.

Here the Jayhawkers burned their wagons. With the oxen as pack animals they could make faster progress and the only hope was to struggle on as rapidly as possible while life lasted.

A march over twenty miles of dry sand brought us to the foot of the mountains [Panamint Range]. With hope almost gone and not a drop of water to relieve our parched lips and swollen tongues. The men climbed up to the snow and brought down all they could carry, frozen hard. Mr. Brier filled an old shirt and brought it to us. Some ate it white and hard and relished it as though it was flowing water, but enough was melted for our frenzied cattle and camp use.

Here we lived on jerked beef and miserable pancakes.

Some of the company told us they were going to leave their cattle, bake up their provisions and push ahead as a last resort. Dr. Carr broke down and cried when we would not go back to the springs. I felt as bad as any of them, but it would never do to give up there. Give up—Ah, I knew what that meant—a shallow grave in the sand.

We crossed the Telescope Range by Towne's Pass. We went over the pass through the snow into what they named Panamint Valley, and found a deserted Indian Village among the mesquite trees [Sulphur Spring north of Ballarat].

We were rejoiced by seeing hair ropes and bridles and horse bones, thinking we had reached civilization. The men ahead, however, could only report more sand and hills. After two days here we struggled away into the desert, carrying all the water possible. We grew more fearful of our provisions and watched each mouthful, not daring to make a full meal. Coffee and salt we had in plenty. The salt we picked up in great lumps in the sand before coming over the last mountains. Our coffee was a wonderful help, and had that given out I know we would have died.

New Year's Day was hardly noticed. We spent it resting at the head of Panamint Valley. Sometimes we went south and again north, not knowing whether or not we should get out of that death hole of sand and salt [chronologically, these two sentences should precede the last two paragraphs].

On January 6th two of our mess decided to leave us and take their provisions. *Towne and the other four decided to leave us.* These men—Masterson and Crumpton—owned the only flour we had, so they baked up their dough, except a small piece, which I made into twenty-two little crackers and put away for an emergency. *I sat up until midnight baking up every morsel of flour we had except one half-pint, which we saved for medicine.* Then with tearful eyes they gave us their hands, with averted faces, and turned away, without a word. That was our last bite of bread until we reached San Francisquito Ranch, six weeks later.[2]

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[2] Several of the Emigrants refer to the rancho as San Francisquito, probably because a nearby canyon (and new road to the gold fields) was named San Francisquito Canyon. There were five Spanish land grants

From then on my husband and I and the poor children and St. John and Patrick lived on coffee and jerked beef, except when we killed an ox for a new supply. Even then there was not an ounce of fat in one and the marrow in their bones had turned to blood and water.

Did I blame the men for leaving us as they did? Oh, it happened so long ago I can hardly tell now—and they felt that they ought to try to save their own lives.

The valley ended in a canyon, with great walls rising up—Oh, as high as we could see, almost [Fish Canyon in the Slate Range]. There seemed no way out for it ended almost in a straight wall. I know many of the company never expected to leave that narrow gorge. By that time most of them could hardly stagger more than a few steps at a stretch; some were beyond even that. Mr. Brier managed to keep erect with the aid of two sticks. Providence was with us that awful night, or the morning would have risen on the dead.

Seeping up from the sand Mr. Brier found a little water, and by digging, the company managed to scoop up about a pint an hour. Coffee and dried beef kept us alive till morning, but the moaning of the suffering cattle was pitiful. At daylight we managed to reach the lowest bench of the cliff by holding to the cattle. Father Fish came up by holding to an ox's tail, but could go no farther. That night he died. I made coffee for him, but he was all worn out. Isham died that night, too

We could discover no signs of drinkable water. One of our men, named Isham, had fallen behind about four miles. A Jayhawker named Richards wandered off up the highest peak of the Inyo Mountains [Argus Range]. In a canyon he discovered what is known as Providence Springs [Indian Joe Spring northwest of Trona], and next day two men went back to look for Isham. They found that he had crawled four miles along our trail on his hands and knees, and had then fallen over and died.[3]

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in California called San Francisquito, but the one the emigrants crossed was Rancho San Francisco.

[3] Note that Mrs. Brier contradicts herself. Based on accounts of others who were there, this second description is correct.

It was always the same—hunger and thirst, and an awful silence, so I'll just tell of one or two more experiences.

Everyone knows how the company went across the Mojave Desert and finally reached San Francisquito Ranch. Our greatest suffering for water was near Borax Lake [now called Searles Lake near Trona]. We were forty-eight hours without a drop. A mirage fooled us. We went to bed hoping against hope.

In the morning the men returned with the same story: "No water."

Even the stoutest heart sank then, for nothing but sage brush and dagger trees greeted the eye. There were wails and lamentations from lips that had never murmured before. My husband tied little Kirke to his back and staggered ahead. The child would murmur occasionally, "Oh, father, where's the water?" His pitiful, delirious wails were worse to bear than the killing thirst. It was terrible. I seem to see it all over again. I staggered and struggled wearily behind with our other two boys and the oxen. The little fellows bore up bravely and hardly complained, though they could hardly talk, so dry and swollen were their lips and tongues. John would try to cheer up his brother Kirke by telling him of the wonderful water we would find and all the good things we could get to eat. Every step I expected to sink down and die. I could hardly see.

At last we came upon two Germans of the company, who had gone ahead. They were cooking at a tiny fire.

"Any water?" asked my husband.

"There's vasser," one said, pointing to a muddy pool.

The cattle rushed into it, churning up mud, but we scooped it up greedily and gulped it down our burning swollen throats. Then I boiled coffee and found the pot half full of mud, so you can see what the water was like. It was awful stuff, but it saved our lives. A little later we came to a beautiful cold spring. Oh, how good it was. I have always believed Providence placed it there to save us, for it was in such an unlikely place.

Sometimes we found water and grass in plenty, but never a thing to eat, save where we tried making acorn bread, and that was a failure. And the silence of it all! At night I would go to bed praying for God to help us through. "Oh," I thought, "if I could

only see something to show the end of our journey." But I didn't dare speak of it for fear of alarming the children.

But I never lost hope. I couldn't give up. We needed all our hope and faith. I knew before starting we would have to suffer, but my husband wanted to go, and he needed me.

When near the place where Mojave is now Robinson said to me: "Mrs. Brier, I have a presentiment I shall never reach California." None of us knew then that we were well across a section of the State.

"Oh, yes, you will; don't give up," I said to cheer him. The next day he fell off his pony and died. The men dug a shallow grave with their knives and laid him to rest [not far from Barrel Spring near Lancaster].

Father Fish said he thought the Lord would bring him through, because he came in such a good cause. He intended to raise enough money to pay off his church's debt, back in Northern Indiana.

Then there was Gould. He would pick up everything the rest threw away, until he had so much that Mr. Brier gave him an ox to carry his load. Gould repented and had a most happy conversion out in the desert.

Before the bread gave out one man, Croker, who was in our party, complained of the short allowance of bread. I told him we must save it as long as possible, and he said, with an oath, that he would have it while it lasted. "You shall," I said, "but that won't be long," and it wasn't. Then he left our mess. Before we were through that journey I heard that man begging for the entrails of a crow.

Did I nurse the sick? Ah, there was little of that to do. I always did what I could for the poor fellows, but that wasn't much. When one grew sick he just lay down, weary-like, and his life went out. It was nature giving up. Poor souls!

So we went on and on until the morning we arrived at San Francisquito ranch. Oh, that was a beautiful morning. Just before this the men had killed a wild mare and two colts and the company ate the meat with a relish, but it tasted too sweet. This morning, February 12, 1850,[4] the sun was bright and the grass

[4]All other references date this event as February 4.

and flowers seemed like Paradise after the awful sand and rocks of the desert. One of the men shot a hawk and another a rabbit and we were preparing to have a feast on them, when we heard more shooting ahead. The wind blew towards us the sound of lowing cattle and we were in great wonder. The Jayhawkers came rushing back with dilated eyes, saying they had seen ten thousand head of cattle and wagon tracks and believed we were near a farm. Oh, what an excitement came over us!

Soon we came up where the Jayhawkers had killed some cattle and saw thousands of head all around, and the men eagerly cut off pieces of warm, raw meat, ready to devour it, when an old Spaniard and some Indian vaqueros came galloping up on fine horses.

Our men expected trouble and held their guns ready. The Spaniard was amazed at our appearance, I suppose. We looked more like skeletons than human beings. Our clothes hung in tatters. My dress was in ribbons, and my shoes, hard, baked, broken pieces of leather. Some of the company still had the remains of worn out shoes with their feet sticking through, and some wore pieces of ox hide tied about their feet. My boys wore ox hide moccasins.

Patrick knew a little Spanish and said to the Spaniards, pointing to Mr. Brier, "Padre."

The old man took off his hat, bowed and said in a broken voice, "Poor little Padre!" He led us up to his house and the old lady burst out crying when she saw our condition. They were very kind and cooked us a grand feast, killing the finest animal among the cattle in honor of the "padre."

Our stomachs were too weak to digest the solid food and we nearly died in fearful agony after eating so heartily.

In the midst of our awful pain Doctor Irving, of Los Angeles, happened along and by the use of medicines relieved us. But for him, some would have died for the men were rolling in fearful pain, all bloated, on the ground. We rested at the ranch and then traveled in to Los Angeles without trouble, being aided all the way.

It was like coming back from death into life again. It was a long, long, weary walk, but thank God, He brought us all out of it.

Charles Alvord, His Rescue and His Murder

ARDIS MANLY WALKER

The romance and tragedy of the Death Valley episode of 1849 radiated, with its survivors, to all points of the compass. And the story of their adventuring in after years maintained much of the heroism and stark tragedy that marked the suffering of those pioneers who struggled out of the forbidding Valley of Death.

The fate of Charles Alvord, friend of William Lewis Manly whose name is perpetuated in the Alvord Mountains south and west of Death Valley, serves to carry forward the gold-seeking tradition of the original '49ers. It also parallels, in a minor way, the dramatic ordeal out of which Manly emerged an outstanding hero of western migration.

In the early 1860s Manly learned of an expedition into the Death Valley country which Alvord had guided for the purpose of relocating a rich vein of gold ore he had discovered on a previous prospecting trip. Among those who accompanied Alvord was Ashael Bennett who Manly had rescued with such unselfish heroism during the winter of 1849-50. From him Manly learned that the other members of the expedition had left Alvord alone and without food in the southern Panamint Mountains because they were angered at his failure to find them the expected bonanza. Upon learning of Alvord's plight, Manly convinced Bennett and Caesar Twitchell to accompany him on a rescue mission.

With the same selfless consideration for others that had marked his rescue of the Argonauts of a few years previous. Manly argued, "if we neglected him, no one would lift a finger in his behalf."

He reminisced afterward "When I concluded that it was my duty to go once again to Death Valley, to save and relieve as good a man as ever lived from starvation, it seemed that I was

born for the unwelcome task of rescuing the unfortunates of that terrible valley."

On their mission of mercy, Manly and his companions followed the trail he and John Rogers had blazed on their return to the emigrants who waited at a sulphur spring on the floor of Death Valley in January of 1850.

Fortunately, they gained unexpected success when the starving Alvord staggered into their camp at the willow patch just above the dry falls in South Park Canyon over which John Rogers and Manly had struggled desperately and in tears with a one-eyed mule bearing provisions to those who had awaited rescue twelve years previously.[1]

Upon recovering his strength, Alvord accompanied Manly, Twitchell, and Bennett on a prospecting tour of the area. This venture ended when Manly and Alvord were abandoned by their companions. After struggling back across the desert to what must have been Indian Wells, these two were found in very weakened condition by a party of prospectors which included Dr. S. G. George of Death Valley fame and a man named Jackson who was to figure in the final, tragic disappearance of Charles Alvord.

Manly and Alvord had stayed at the Kernville Ranch of Joseph Caldwell on one of their subsequent prospecting trips to the Death Valley region. After parting with Alvord and arriving at his San Jose home, Manly received a letter from Caldwell expressing anxiety for the safety of Alvord. In the letter it was pointed out that the Jackson who was with Dr. George when Manly and Alvord were found at Indian Wells had entered Alvord's life again. He had persuaded Alvord to accompany him prospecting for coal on the west side of Buena Vista Lake where he had found "bituminous springs." Later Caldwell saw a miner down Kern River sporting Alvord's gun, which he recognized by its long barrels and silver ornaments on its stock. The new owner said that he had purchased the gun from Jackson. Likewise

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[1] New research shows that this dry waterfall is in Redlands Canyon, a couple canyons south of South Park Canyon in the Panamint Range. The fall is now named Ox-Jump Fall and the "willow patch" is at Redlands Spring.

another miner told Caldwell that he had purchased Alvord's burro from Jackson.

Suspicious miners gathered and investigated conditions at the camp recently deserted by Jackson and Alvord. Jackson and his mules were gone, but the place did not seem abandoned. The miners decided to await Jackson's return and hang him on the spot.

But Jackson did not return. Meantime, Dr. George and others of Alvord's friends made a careful search, which revealed a human skeleton "stripped of every particle of human flesh by birds and wild animals." Nearby Dr. George found Alvord's pocket knife.

Thus; along the tragic trail of the Bug-Smashers who had shared the Death Valley ordeal of 1849, was enacted another tragedy. Charles Alvord, a kindly man of culture, was swallowed in a mysterious abyss into which even the kindly and courageous Manly could not venture on another mission of mercy.

The Battle of Wingate Pass

L. BURR BELDEN

Reprinted courtesy of Westways Magazine, November 1954.

Death Valley Scotty's record-breaking train ride to Chicago in July, 1905, made his name a household word. The desert extrovert liked publicity, and lots of it. On his return to the West Coast Scotty agreed to star in a melodrama on the San Francisco stage. The title was, "Scotty, King of the Desert Mine." Scotty never knew whether it would have been a success or not. He was in jail after the first night's performance, arrested on a telegraph warrant from Sheriff John C. Ralphs of San Bernardino County.

This warrant was the outgrowth of a skirmish, or holdup near the south end of Death Valley. The skirmish has generally been known as "The Battle of Wingate Pass." It happened when Scotty and a party of Eastern capitalists were held up by two men Scott had sent ahead for that purpose. This holdup pair was supposed to shoot one of Scott's mules, but a wild bullet seriously wounded Scott's older brother, Warner. In the excitement Scotty temporarily forgot his role in the farce and raced ahead shouting "Stop shooting. You hit one of my men." That let the cat out of the bag. The Easterners, bitter over being taken for suckers, started prosecution.

One of the men who agreed to ambush Scott's party, and possibly the only survivor of the affair, is Bill Keyes, well known desert miner who lives on his ranch in the Joshua Tree National Monument. Now nearly fifty years after the "battle" Keyes has broken his silence regarding the affair for which, incidentally, he was arrested at the time.

This is the way Keyes remembers the "Battle":

"Scotty had done some big talking about a mine he was supposed to own. He didn't have any mine, but he did have a Wall Street fellow who grubstaked him. Some New York men had asked him about the mine. Sure, he would sell.

"I was out in that part of the desert and I owned a mine at the south end of Death Valley. Scotty came to me and told me these money men were headed out to look at his mine. We agreed that if they had to look at a mine Scotty would show them my claim and we would split.

"Scotty kept saying the men were looking for a big mine, a proposition worth millions. He began to get cold feet on showing them my mine. Said he would make more if this bunch got discouraged and told a big story when they got back home.

"I don't just remember how the fake holdup idea got started, but Bob Belt, he was an Indian, and I went on ahead to do a little scare shooting. That was the kind of atmosphere folks expected out in the wild West. After the shooting, if the Eastern people wanted to go ahead, Scotty was to show them my mine. You know it didn't turn out that way.

"Bob and I got to the spot selected and had a long wait. It was a hot day up there in the rocks and the gallon jug we had didn't last too long. Bob didn't hold his whiskey very well. When Scotty's rig came along he fired that wild shot that hit Warner Scott. That was when Scotty lost his head and tipped off the whole deal. Those Easterners were scared all right. One was so scared he thought he was shot. They weren't so scared however that they didn't hear what Scotty said."

Bill Keyes chuckled over the fate of the Easterner who kept calling for medical attention as he lay on the floor of the wagon. Keyes omitted any reference of his own arrest but spoke of once eluding Sheriff Ralphs and Undersheriff Samuel W. McNabb. Ralph was hunting Keyes and had sighted the latter's mule team. The sheriff had left his own wagon and tried to head off Keyes on foot.

"He couldn't catch me," Keyes said, "the sheriff had lost one of his boots on the trip out from Barstow and he was wearing patent leather shoes. You can bet he didn't walk very far."

The *San Bernardino Sun* of March 3, 1906, broke the story of the Wingate Pass holdup under the headline "Reaching for Scotty's Scalp."

The wounded Warner Scott was taken to a Los Angeles hospital where private guards successfully fended off the Los Angeles press. No guards stopped Undersheriff McNabb. He

brushed past them into the hospital room, pulled back the covers on Warner's bed and satisfied himself that the man was actually wounded. That was all the information Sheriff Ralphs needed. Charges were filed, Scott arrested in San Francisco, Keyes and Belt brought in from the desert and trial started in superior court.

The trial didn't last long. At the outset, Scotty's lawyer raised the question of jurisdiction contending the "battle" had been in Inyo County. A survey crew was sent out and sure enough, as near as could be ascertained, the fake holdup had been 200 yards or so north of the San Bernardino County line. The case was transferred to Independence, the county seat of Inyo, but prosecution there was dropped when the disgusted Eastern victims decided to call it quits and go back to New York.

The Story of "Cap" Lemoigne

JAMES B. "JIM" NOSSER

"Cap" Lemoigne, Death Valley region prospector and one-time owner of the Bullet Mine, was a gentleman, especially when he talked with the ladies.

I remember meeting him when I was about 25 years old. It was at the old frame building in Olancha in Owens Valley. This roadside stopping place served as a welcome Coffee Shop for those traveling north and south through the valley, or going east over the gravel roads into Death Valley.

If I remember correctly, it was in 1919 when I ran into Cap at the Olancha Coffee Shop.[1] We had breakfast together.

After taking our orders, a waitress asked Lemoigne:

"Cap, I understand you make wonderful coffee." Incidentally, Cap's coffee, boiled over a campfire and served up in tin cups in the cool of the morning, was excellent.

"Yes mam, I do make very good coffee," said Cap. The waitress took out her notebook to write the breakfast check and Cap continued:

"I just use a lot of good coffee, very little water and then let it bile and bile and bile. Yep, that's good coffee."

Cap Lemoigne was a great character. He had been a seafaring man and sailed the Seven Seas as a bosun's mate.

My association with him came through my friendship with Bill Corcoran, another Death Valley prospector. Corcoran had been associated with Cap in the old Bullet Mine, which was located near the junction of Cottonwood and the Panamint ranges, almost west of what is now the entrance to Death Valley.

The Bullet Mine produced very little real wealth. Several lead-silver shipments were made from some heavy lead stringers, but there was only limited production. Bill Corcoran and Cap made a good team. I suppose you know that Bill was the

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[1] Most references say Jean Francois Lemoigne was born in France about 1842 and died in 1918, but Lingenfelter (in *Death Valley and the Amargosa)* says it was 1919. He was educated in England, Paris, and Germany as a mining engineer and filed a claim for his Bullet Mine in the Cottonwood area in the 1880s.

discoverer of the First National Bank Mine in the Bullfrog Hills near Rhyolite. This discovery was in 1905 when Bill was only 19 years of age.

Bill sold that property for $20,000 in gold coin.

He was a huge man, weighed about 215 pounds and carried two large money belts in which he placed his gold. He probably packed around 80 pounds of the coin with him.

But gold and Bill didn't stay together too long. He always said that he needed to keep a couple of mountain ranges between him and the nearest whiskey.

Bill was a working partner with Cap in the Bullet Mine. Later, when Lemoigne died in 1920, Bill became the sole owner of the Bullet property.

There's the experience, too, when Corcoran almost perished from thirst on a trip to the Bullet Mine for samples. That was in 1929. Bill was so weakened from this brush with death that he died a year later. But, that's another story.

You asked where Lemoigne was buried. No one knows for sure. We do know that he was going from his mine to Furnace Creek by way of Stovepipe Wells.

Bill Corcoran surmised that Cap died some two or three miles east and north of Stovepipe, roughly near the edge of the Devil's Cornfield. Probably he died from a heart attack.

He left his mules harnessed and tied. They died too. That is how they figured Lemoigne had a heart attack, possibly stopped when taken sick, and died before he could even let his animals go free. He was too humane a man to have doomed them.

There is a spot marked "Lemoigne's Grave" on some maps. It is on the old road east of the present Stovepipe Wells Hotel. How accurate the marking is, I don't know.[2]

Cap knew the Death Valley area like a book. Of French descent, he came there sometime between 1900 and 1906 during

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[2]The grave is now thought to be west of the highway between Cow Creek and Salt Creek. In *Death Valley & the Amargosa,* Lingenfelter reports that Harry Gower, with Tom Wilson, buried Lemoigne "under a mesquite bush near Salt Well." But Scotty, Frank Crampton, and Shorty Harris claim to have buried him and deserved to collect the $40 from the coroner for doing so.

the Rhyolite boom. He was a slender man and wore a great growth of whiskers. He walked stooped. His French accent made him clip his words yet he was a plainly spoken, courteous old man.

He was just another of those venturesome characters who trod the sands of Death Valley and nearby regions, looking for pay dirt.

The Law at Greenwater

CHARLES A. BROWN

Greenwater was a copper boomtown in 1904-1907 with a thousand men and no water. Town lots sold for $5,000 each, there were two newspapers, two stage lines, and predictions of the railroad coming in and a well being dug to provide water—neither of which happened. It owed its short life to the speculative stock frenzy that promoters encouraged in the East. Although millions of dollars were taken from investors, less than $3,000 worth of ore was taken out. Greenwater got its name from the green tint copper gave a hole of water. This dry desert site is located east of the Funeral Mountains, east of Death Valley. Charles Brown was the California Senator from Inyo/Mono Counties.

In 1907, the early part of 1907, a fellow by the name of Madison was over at Willow Creek. He ran a bar there. He gave the county a bad check for his liquor license. The sheriff, George Naylor, came over from Independence but didn't catch up with Madison, so left matters with Jim Rogers, his deputy.

Madison sent in word that no sheriff, nor anyone else would take him alive. After Naylor was gone, Madison showed up in Greenwater and got on one of his rampages. His reputation was so bad and his threats so black that when Madison came in one end of the town, the deputy went out the other. So they had to have a new deputy.

The businessmen and the miners union got together and asked Sheriff Naylor to appoint me. That was my first experience at being a law enforcement officer. All the typical bad men of the west seemed to gravitate to Greenwater, and I had to resort to fighting a bit even though I was a deputy. At first it frightened me to see all the gun play, then it began to be funny to see the boys getting tough. They gradually learned I couldn't be bluffed easily—not because I was so bold, just that I was young and didn't have sense enough to know danger. Shortly after my appointment I tried to grow a mustache in keeping with my 210 pounds and new position, but it just didn't prosper.

Arthur Kunze, one of the discoverers of Greenwater, bought a lot of lumber and went into business. Kunze was absent from

camp for a while and a young fellow named Roach proceeded to move in and take over Kunze's business, office and house. Then Kunze came back. I heard somebody calling me from about two blocks away. I ran over to the lumber company office. Kunze had Roach down on the floor and was beating him up. I put my hand on his shoulder and said, "From the looks of things you have your revenge." Kunze let go and, as he did so, Roach slipped behind a desk and pulled a gun. "That's a nice gun, Roach," I said. "I could use it." Roach handed it over. As I left Kunze started beating Roach once more, so we had a little tussle. By that time the boys were tired and more agreeable. I kept Roach's gun for many years but he never asked for it.

One day Murdock Smith and I were standing on a corner. Smith was well filled with conceit and confided in me that all the girls were crazy about him. It went on and he boasted that Diamond Lil was wild about him. I suggested that no girl of Lil's caliber would be crazy about anybody. Smitty then switched to a waitress in the mine company's boarding house who he said was madly in love with him. He resented my doubts and wanted to fight, but it wasn't much trouble to get him seated.

Now nature had given Smitty a protruding but nicely rounded bottom. He exploded when I hinted that his waitress girl wanted to know if he wore a bustle. Smith came at me with a rock in his hand. It wasn't much of a fight. I slapped him a couple of times. He never spoke to me again all the time we were in Greenwater.

Greenwater was a town of about 3,000. There was a bank, two grocery stores and eight saloons where they sold wet goods. Wondell's, Joe Lecyr's, Pete Lang's and some smaller tent places folded after the big rush. Pete Lang had one of the bigger saloons. Business was down and Pete decided to look for a better spot. He piled all his whiskey in the center of the floor and covered it with a tarp. At the time I was living in a big 18x20 tent. Joe Hudson, a good drinking man, was living with me. I woke up one night when he came in. Joe was making unfamiliar noises so I lighted a lamp. Joe must have made several trips before I awoke, for he had three cases of champagne and four of choice whiskey piled by his bunk.

"Joe, you better take that stuff away," I said. "Pete will be back and this will be the first place he will come with a search warrant for me to serve." Hudson had an idea. He got a shovel and dug a ditch all around the tent. In it he carefully buried the bottles one by one.

Twenty-four hours later Lang was back. He had been to the justice of peace and had a search warrant he brought me in the middle of the night. We went down to another bar run by Scotty. In Scotty's cellar we found whole cases of liquor taken from Lang's place. Lang was pretty mad but we began to talk things over. It seemed sort of useless to put Scotty in jail, so they dickered and Scotty paid Pete for the whiskey. They were both so happy over the sale that Lang made me a present of a five-gallon demijohn of whiskey and Scotty gave me $25. After Lang had taken the rest of his stock and left town, Hudson started digging in his ditch around our tent. He drank the whiskey while I worked on the champagne. It took me several months to drink up three cases, but by that time I had a fine taste for Mum's Extra Dry.

Greenwater's boom year was 1906. At the peak there must have been 5,000 people in camp. With Charles M. Schwab and the dark interests as backers, things looked like prosperity was there to stay. They went so far as to have a railroad line surveyed. Telegraph and telephone lines were strung. Greenwater Copper Mines had five operations going and spent over a million and a quarter dollars on development. Two or three other companies were there, too, with smaller investments. Water was brought from Lemonade Springs, over by Furnace Creek. Parts of the old pipe line are still there, and the tank beside the road too. Water was a bit scarce and every drop was conserved.

Gambling really flourished. Money was plentiful and poker players used 20-dollar gold pieces for chips. One night a table was held by a young fellow who was having a lot of fun cleaning out the glasses and shooting out the lamps. I walked in and said, "You've had a good time, but it's about time to close the show." He hit at me. I dodged. The second time around I put handcuffs on him. That was too much, he thought, as he shouted, "Remnants of barbarism."

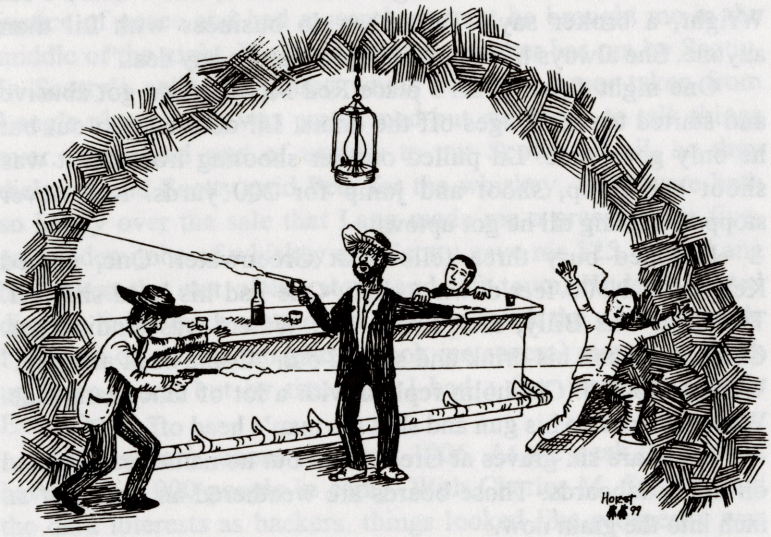
Lil Lang, Mother Agnes and Tiger Lil came down from Rhyolite looking for greener fields and more money. They ran the three principal houses. Tiger Lil was a fine looking woman. She came into town wearing a beautiful dress with tiger lilies painted on it. Among the business people she was highly thought of. There was a lot of dealing in real estate, and I heard Paul Wright, a broker say, "I'd rather do business with Lil than anyone. She always lived up to her promise on any deal."

One night down at Lil's place Red McCrimmon got abusive and started tearin' hinges off the doors. Lil ordered him out but he only got worse. Lil pulled out her shooting iron and it was shoot and jump, shoot and jump for 200 yards. Red never stopped running till he got uptown.

I helped bury three fellows at Greenwater. One, named Kelly, fell 1,300 feet down a shaft. One had his head shot off. The third was Billy, the printer. Bill Waters was tending bar. Chisholm drank his drink and started out. "Come back and pay," Waters shouted. Chisholm replied with a lot of fancy language. Waters picked up his gun and shot the man's head off.

There are six graves at Greenwater but no names can be read on the headboards. Those boards are weathered an eighth of an inch into the grain now.

Billy the printer's leaving is the one to remember. Billy worked on the *Greenwater Times*. Hard work was slack so Billy put in all of his time at the bars until he died with the delirium tremens. Word got around fast, for everyone liked Billy. He was laid out on a tarp in a vacant house. I got some tacks and we covered the coffin with black cloth so it wouldn't look like the usual rough pine box. Someone else took some handles off a dresser and screwed them into the sides. Billy was shaved and placed in his coffin, his right hand over his breast. Tiger Lil was going by. She stopped and said, "He just doesn't look quite natural." Lil went away for a bit then returned and asked us to leave her alone in the room. When we went back in, Lil had completed the decorations. Billy held five aces in the hand on his breast. He did look more natural and we buried him that way.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Mule Skinning in 1905

CAPTAIN R. A. GIBSON

In the early 1900s, I had been telegraph operator at Manvel, now a ghost town in the eastern part of San Bernardino County, but then the principal station on the little California Eastern Railroad that ran north from Goffs. Manvel was the commercial center for the nearby Vanderbilt mines and was also a shipping point for such places as Goldfield. I was a youngster who had come west and succumbed to the lure of mining when my Santa Fe train reached Needles. A telegraph key just wasn't romantic enough for me so I hired on as swamper with one of the Rose and Palmer long mule teams that freighted supplies from nearby Ivanpah into Nevada.

The Rose teams followed a route north from Ivanpah Dry Lake over State Line Pass, up the Sandy and Pahrump valleys to Ash Meadows and on to a spot that became Beatty, Nevada. Two wagons were hitched tandem fashion behind a long team of 12 or 16 mules, the number depending on the size of the wagons and their load. The second wagon was loaded largely with fuel—hay for the mules and grub for the driver and swamper. Water barrels were lashed on either side of both wagons and were refilled at every spring or well. The water holes were at such spots as the Manse ranch of Harsha White, Stump Springs on the old Mormon Trail, and Pahrump Ranch. In the upper Pahrump, to break the long waterless stretch to Resting Springs, Rose and Palmer had dug a well. It was so far down to water that they kept an old mare there just to haul up the bucket by rope and pulley.

Beatty was only a collection of tents, but it was already a junction point with freight lines running up to Tonopah and Goldfield and lots of traffic to the new mines at nearby Bullfrog. We dumped out loads and set up a depot there. In fact the depot became a general store and lumber yard, I was in partners on the enterprise and was just learning the stock when a post office inspector came in and wanted to know if I could read and write. He no sooner found I could than he told me I was postmaster. It seems a post office had been ordered for Beatty and mail was

already arriving. By some oversight, the man named postmaster couldn't read. When the inspector reached camp to set up the post office, he took things into his hands and made a quick change. The change made me postmaster.

Youngster that I was, I craved a bit more social life than Beatty afforded, so the next summer, when it was getting a bit warm, I took off for Southern California's beaches. By late fall swimming and dancing had a harder and harder time competing with the lure of the desert. I moved into the Hollenbeck Hotel at Los Angeles, as that was the accepted headquarters for desert men, and looked around for a party heading out for the Mojave. On the street I bumped into George Rose, my old employer of swamper days. Rose, who owned the Desert King Mine, west of Owl Holes, was in the city to buy wagons and a new mule team. He needed a swamper and thought I had done all right swamping on the Ivanpah-Beatty line, so here was my free ticket back to the desert, plus a little pay.

Rose purchased two Bain wagons, and on Aliso St. he bought ten unbroken mules. From later experience I judged they must have been raised on dynamite. It took five of us from 5 a.m. to 3 p.m. just to get those mules harnessed and hitched in spans. Rose had hired Jack Brennan, a graduate mule skinner from Arizona, as driver. Because of the green team there were two swampers, Rose's son Marcine and I. Young Rose had his saddle horse. He went on ahead with a rope fastened to the nigh leader of the team, Brennan drove, handling the jerk line, and I walked on either side of the sixes using a fishpole to prod them either to the left or right. Rose and Brennan had picked out the teams with the largest and heaviest animals as wheelers to handle the wagon tongue. The leaders, fours, sixes, and eights were all good strong mules but, at the start, they had a lot to learn. My main job was to teach the fours and sixes when to hop over the chain on curves.

Our first day we only traveled as far as Monterey Park where we camped. We broke camp again at 4 a.m., gulped our bacon and coffee, and started the big job of hitching. While the mules were still a bit wild, we had them in harness and started off by 10 a.m. The road was rough and sandy and the country east of Monterey Park sparsely settled. Because it was a harder pull, the

mules handled better so we reached Claremont that night. A neighboring orange grower walked over to our camp, and when he found we were heading for Death Valley, insisted we take along some fruit. He even helped us and half-filled one wagon with oranges. We just about lived on oranges and gave away whole bushels of them in Hesperia and Daggett.

The third night we camped in a grove on the outskirts of San Bernardino and took in a show at the Opera House. We were riding high and bought box seats. An early start got us to the lower part of Cajon Pass at noon and into threatened rain. By mid-afternoon we reached the abandoned Crowder Ranch where we camped in the vacant house and bedded the mules down in a shed. There was two inches of dust on everything but with rain starting outside it was far better than an open camp. The old house was our camp for three days because during the first night the rain turned to snow and you couldn't see 50 yards in that blizzard.

After snow and wind had stopped we had a hard time finding the old road up over the top of the pass. There wasn't much teaming that way anymore and no one had driven through since the storm. Several times the wagons came near slipping off the trail into the canyon and probably would have except for quick jabs of my fishpole and Brennan's whip to force a spurt out of the team.

To keep from freezing, the three of us walked much of the way over the summit and down past Hesperia into Victorville where we camped by a blacksmith shop. Several mules had thrown shoes in the last mad scramble up the pass. We laid over a day and headed for Daggett by the old Stoddard Well route. We had about reached Stoddard Mountain when a coyote, who had been sleeping under a creosote bush, jumped out under the feet of the lead mules. The half-broken team was off. A runaway with a 10-mule team is a dangerous affair at best but Jack Brennan knew his stuff. He kept a jerk line tight in a steady pull and the leaders turned in a big circle. Fortunately it was a level spot where mules and wagons circled a dozen times in great dust clouds until the animals tired and slowed down. Before they were through we had flattened enough brush to accommodate a circus camp.

Again we started, congratulating ourselves that none was hurt, when the nigh leader stepped in a rabbit hole and broke a leg. This was Dec. 25, 1905, and we were planning on a feast when we reached Daggett. There was nothing to do but shoot the injured animal and this dampened our holiday spirits. Jack took out one of the eights to substitute for the missing lead mule, and hitched the other behind the wagon. After camping for the night we rolled into Daggett with an eight-mule team.

The storm we had weathered in the Cajon had been general in the San Bernardino Mountains. The result was the Mojave River was running high at Daggett. We had to cross and talked of trying the railroad bridge but a blacksmith, who knew a trick or two about the Mojave bottom sands, showed us a better way. He supplied each of us with a crowbar and an armful of creosote bush branches as we wondered what was in the wind. We watched as he waded into the river, sinking the crowbar and withdrawing it quickly. Wherever he sank the iron bar the sand settled down hard and he marked the spot with a piece of brush. We three followed and soon made a hard path over the river bottom. Then, before the hard-packed ford had time to shift, Jack started the mules running. In they plunged, the lead mule tied to young Rose's *riata*. I stood in the lead wagon and let fly a barrage of stones whenever a mule looked like he wanted to slow up. Over we went, as if we were crossing a bridge.

After the crossing we camped on the other side and were joined by many mining friends. The next day we broke camp and headed for the Desert King Mine in Death Valley. The road we took went through the Calico Hills to Coyote and Langford Wells, then east to Bitter Spring and over Red Pass to Silver Lake. At Silver Lake there was some more outfitting before the final pull up to Owl Holes and Twin Springs. A tenth mule was put in harness and we took the road north to the mine.

This was one of the last long mule teams to head north, possibly the last from the San Bernardino Valley. Soon after that, the Death Valley region had its first rail connection from Las Vegas, and hard on its heels came the Tonopah & Tidewater pushed up from Ludlow. The mule freighters were reduced to short one-day hauls to railheads. That was their last stand, and it didn't take many teams for such short hauls.

So None Died of Thirst

JOHN W. HILTON

The little black Ford still gave off the smell of new paint under the warm sun of a desert spring. The same warmth had penetrated my heart as I saw the sun rise over a ragged piece of lava that had not yet had time to weather down to a respectable shaped hill. I was as happy as a young man can be, for the Ford was all mine and so was the desert!

There was something special about this morning. I had traveled the desert before with my preaching, rock-hunting father who sometimes had to build houses to support his other two occupations. We had enjoyed it immensely but, as I left camp at Garlic Springs, I felt that this was at last real living. I was alone: the weather was fine, I had dependable transportation, grub, water and camp outfit and I was headed for Death Valley via Cave Springs!

Prospectors had told me of this spot where water came out of a cave in the rock and where old timers had stopped since before the days of twenty mule teams. It had been an objective in the back of my mind.

We bounced along over the rocky road (the glittering Ford and I) and I stopped from time to time on the rise of a hill to look around at the range upon range of desert hills fading off into the blue haze. Would I ever cover them all in my lifetime? Would anyone?

Finally, after many stops to prospect and look, we topped a rise and dropped into a narrow pass. There, on the right, were the ruins of the old rock houses and just beyond them the tunnel-like cave with a trickle of water coming out and running across the road. I had made it in time for a late lunch. A few quail called from the catsclaw down the wash and some doves talked to each other in the brush above the overhanging rocks. I set about to make camp and stay for several days, maybe I would not even go on to Death Valley this time; it was so nice here and my vacation was short. Finally, I laid down on my camp cot, watched the lengthening shadows, and gave myself over to the day dreams, which only extreme youth and very old age can afford.

I called my self "The Wanderer of the Wasteland" in those days but only to myself. I think I would have died of mortification had anyone discovered my secret name. In fact, this is my first public confession of the affair I was having with the desert. She was my secret mistress—lovely in her spring moods, violent in her storms, mysterious, peaceful and eternal yet implacable in her punishment of those who broke her rules. There were times when I feared and almost hated her but I could never stay away from her for long—nor can I now.

Since everyone who came to the desert seemed to need an explanation, mine was a search for gems. I found them, and in some cases I sold them, but it was always as though I was selling the gifts and mementos of a sweetheart, and I used most of the money to visit her again.

Perhaps sometime, somehow, I could live on the desert all of the time. I would strike a gem mine. Something fine would happen—I dozed off for a few moments and then awakened to a throbbing sound. It was the motor of a car coming up the wash from the Death Valley side.

I sat up on the cot as an old, high-wheeled vehicle came to a stop in front of the spring and a long-legged, slim man with drooping mustache unlimbered from the front seat and started putting water in the steaming radiator. He glanced my way and nodded and I nodded back but remained seated on my cot. "Perhaps," I thought, "if I pay no attention to him he will go on and leave me and my desert alone." But he got in, drove up to where I was sitting and turned off his motor. I suddenly hated the man and feared him as one can only hate and fear an older rival. He sat looking at me from the height of the front seat and surveyed my camp with a faint smile.

"There's not any gold in this wash, sonny," he volunteered.

"The prospectors that built this shindig found that out to their sorrow."

"Sonny!" I fumed to myself and to him, "I'm not looking for gold, that's for fools."

He frowned and then smiled again as he pulled his long legs out of the car and strode toward me with outstretched hand. "You're right there, boy. Dead right and I'm one of 'em. Guess I've spent just about half my life lookin' for the stuff and never

made enough to go on a real bender. Most of the gold 'round here is in the sunset" he said, nodding back over his shoulder as I took his hand, "but don't let 'em fool you that gold's real twenty-four carat and they can't take it away from you. The name's Egbert, Adrian 0. Egbert. I camped here the first time in 1894, been comin' back from time to time ever since. I might stay here this time, build me a little place and settle down." He paused and seemed to sense the hostility I was trying to hide. "Hope you don't mind, I got a sort of prior claim to this here camp but you're welcome as the flowers in May, now or any other time."

You couldn't resent a man like this for long so we were soon preparing a joint supper in the fading twilight and Adrian was going on with his plans for a "house by the side of the road."

"I'll have me a little store here and sell gas and groceries," he said. "It's a real nice place to live. When it's a hundred and twenty outside, it's as low as seventy-five in the caves. I'll never make much money but it's a good life, the way I look at it. Some day, folks won't have to make excuses or have a reason to come to Death Valley, they'll just come because they like it and it's good for their souls."

We sat up till all hours while he told stories about Scotty, Bill Keyes, Dad Fairbanks, and Elmo Proctor, all of whom I later met.

A year or so later, I think it was spring, 1926, I came back and found his now famous water caches scattered along the road between Barstow and Cave Springs and from Yermo to Garlic Springs. They were more elaborate at first with a box of matches, a plug of chewing tobacco, even a tight can with some soda crackers in each. There were careful instructions if you were out of water in hot weather. "Stay right here in the shade of your car," the note read, "till it cools off, then carry what is left in the water jug with you and just keep walking to the next water cache. It's white-washed so you can see it at night. Pick up the full jug and come on in to Cave Springs. Don't get upset, everything will be all right."

At first he had nine such emergency water stations. Six were placed strategically along the Barstow–Cave Springs route and

three more between Yermo and Garlic Springs but he eventually abandoned the latter three as the road fell into disuse.

He soon found out that not everyone appreciated his gesture as they should. They would go off with the matches and tobacco without even a thank you note and some even sat the jugs out on a rock for target practice but Adrian kept on filling and replacing his jugs. He finally left off detailed information because he said no one had ever taken the time to read it if they were really in a bad spot.

When people questioned him about the way some folks treated his generosity, he had a stock answer. "That ain't my worry. It's on their conscience, not mine. Nobody has ever died on my road since I put the bottles out."

The caches finally evolved into a white painted box with a gallon jug inside bearing a label asking that the user of the water please bring the empty jugs in to Cave Springs to be refilled. Often this was not done so he always hauled plenty of water on each trip into town and checked each jug. His theory was that many people who took advantage of the water did not want to admit they had been "durned fools" enough to come unprepared past that Auto Club sign which read, Warning Do Not Attempt This Route Without Ample Supplies of Gas, Oil and Water. As for the people he referred to as the "Smart monkeys who shoot up water caches and road signs," he said they were divided into two classes. "One is the criminally ignorant who ought to have stayed home and the other is them durned cattle men who don't want nobody else travelin' these roads and will do most anything, including slight cases of murder, to keep folks out of the country."

Adrian was violent in his hatred of these people, stating that if he were God he would place them so low on the scale it would take a special dispensation from the Pope to raise them to the level of the eternally damned. Once, one woman drank some emergency water, though Adrian said he didn't think she was really "bad off," and not only wrote a note of thanks but came back with a poem she wrote about the "Samaritan of Death Valley."

"Had a hard time gittin' rid of her," he recalled, "she stayed around quite a while, eatin' up my grub and putting things where

I couldn't find 'em. Don't like women folks around. They can't stand to let a man sit and think, always butt in with small talk if they catch him at it."

Nevertheless, toward the end, he had "women folks" of his own in the form of a relative, Mrs. Sweetman. She helped him with the store and gas station and seemed to fit into the pattern of his latter days. Perhaps she sensed when to keep quiet.

Letters of appreciation often came to Egbert for his work and articles in the newspapers and magazines. "But all of 'em came from folks who really didn't need the water" he would muse. "If you do something nice in the hope of getting a reward or even a sign of gratitude, you're hollerin' up the wrong rain spout. But if you do nice things because it make you feel good inside, then you got your pay and it's like that gold we talk about in the sunset, they can't take it away from you."

It Don't Hurt Him None

HARRY P. GOWER

Fresh out of school in 1914 I hooked up with the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad in a construction gang engaged in the construction of a branch line that extended 21 miles from the T & T Mainline to the borax mines then being opened up at Ryan in the Funeral Mountains overlooking Death Valley.[1]

There were three of us in the surveying party, and though hired as a chainman, I was shortly presented with a saddle horse and given the additional honor and title of timekeeper. All I had to do a couple times a day in this phase of my work was to ride along the dusty grade and check off those of our 150 Mexicans that I found on the job. On a cold or windy day it was easier, though against the rules, to go through the bunk tents and check off the Mexicans not working, giving all others "A" for attendance even against the possibility that they were in neither place but actually in Death Valley Junction on a drunk. Though I speak of Mexicans, we did have a few Americans in the crew among whom was a tall slim kid of sixteen who had walked into camp looking for a job as a teamster. The grading boss wasn't impressed but did say, "There are four mules in the corral and a Fresno scraper[2] beside the blacksmith shop, let's see what you can do with them." That was our introduction to a local character who still astounds us, George Ishmael, just off an Ash Meadow ranch where his father, one time foreman of Greenland Ranch in Death Valley, was running raw boned cattle and farming a few acres of alkali land.

Our hero had hardly been off a ranch during his lifetime, knew all about mules and had that quartette hitched up and moving dirt in no time. He stayed on all that summer, and though generally self-employed making a living for a large family, has

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[1] "New" Ryan was the Pacific Coast Borax company town overlooking Furnace Creek Wash. Harry lived and worked there for many years.

[2] A road grader or scraper pulled by two or more mules and controlled by a man who walked behind the grader.

returned to the borax company payroll from time to time. On the Saturday night of his first week in camp he asked to borrow my horse in order to ride home to report his whereabouts to his family. I said, "Okay, but be sure you are back here in the morning to take out your team." That's the last we saw of George or my horse for a week, during which time a reference to him as a low down horse thief was the mildest heard. One morning he sneaked in to occupy his place at the breakfast table, took forty verbal lashes from the boss and got his job back only because good teamsters were hard to find. The alibi we had to accept was that arriving home on the evening before the local cattle roundup his father had interned him and the horse till the job was done.

George grew up to a burly six footer, got into various lines of mining, moving and transportation, married Luella Carpenter, and raised quite a family from which grand children and even great grandchildren are now spreading all over Nevada. As related above, he stole my horse after a three day acquaintance and later on when the kids got hungry he rustled a steer, shot a deer out of season or a mountain sheep, never in season. That he was a rough character right from the start was affirmed by W. W. Cahill, superintendent of the T & T Railroad. He, on a trip to Furnace Creek around the turn of the century remonstrated with Old Man Ishmael when he saw baby George on the ground suckled by a hound bitch. Ishmael said, "Forget it, he does it all the time and it don't hurt him none." Though tough and unlettered he's still likeable and accommodating, drives a 20 mule team when the occasion demands, barbecues a steer (some one else's steer) for a picnic, and can repair a watch or a tractor. He doesn't drink; well, anyhow, not much, but women and the belief that he is a good poker player have through the years kept him in the lower financial brackets.

Luella was also from a ranch in Ash Meadows, a State Line settlement without schools or other cultural advantages and the capital of Nevada's bootleg industry in prohibition days. She was as big and rough as George but couldn't stand the pace and went early to an assured reward after presenting him with five husky youngsters. I recall her in her prime at a gathering of desert characters in an Ash Meadows shack where cards and bootleg

liquor were available. George was out on his truck hauling clay to the railroad bunkers, and their latest offspring was asleep on a blanket in the corner of the room while Luella bucked the poker game. She noticed a prospector and local reprobate standing behind her to look but not particularly at the game. She hauled out a breast of Junoesque proportions, and robbing the sleeping baby of its dinner, gave Bill an eyewash of mother's milk that he didn't soon forget. Replacing the weapon in its scabbard the game went on as if nothing had happened.

George at times was associated with the moving business. New desert mining camps which sprang up from time to time were composed to some extent of shacks and houses moved from other deserted camps, and George with his trucks and wide home made trailers was always on hand to move anything anywhere and quick. For instance, one day he came along a stretch of Nevada highway under construction between State Line and Lathrop Wells. He stopped for conversation with the workmen there and came up with a deal with one of them. Seems the man's well had gone dry and he engaged Ishmael to move the shack in which he had been living on the Nevada Desert to Death Valley Junction where water and other facilities of a rural village were available. With an advance payment in hand George was soon on the scene with his big flat truck, rollers, jacks, and an Indian helper.

When he began to raise the building all hell broke loose in the shape of a somewhat intoxicated woman who had been rudely awakened. She ordered them off the premises, refused to ride in the truck cab to the new home she had never heard of, and barricaded the door. Not being one to return a down payment George proceeded to raise the shack in spite of a torrent of abuse from inside, rolled it onto the truck, and made it fast with the only door against the truck cab. A couple of hours later the house was lowered in town and the sobered prisoner released to storm out in search of a deputy sheriff or judge with whom to file a charge of kidnapping, grand larceny, and attempted murder. However the man of the house arrived about then and ordered his spouse back to the cook stove.

And if that doesn't prove his versatility, what about his recovery of an Army plane that made a forced landing on the

floor of Death Valley in the mud a mile from shore? No one was hurt, but when George offered to get it out of there for $1000.00 the Army brass called him a crook and advertised for bids to cover the job. He then bid $1500.00 and there being no others willing to take a chance in that morass they called him a damned crook but gave him the job. He spent a half day in our shop at Furnace Creek bolting some four by fours to the tracks of his tractor giving him two, four-foot-wide treads. On this contraption he flitted across the mud flats, pulled out the plane, and was back on the shore again within a half hour. With the $1500.00 in his pocket he didn't care what they called him. George is still around, slowed down a bit perhaps, but has a nice little ranch on the southern slopes of Mt. Charleston. You can usually find some venison hanging in the barn. Doesn't seem to have any visible means of support but has money in his pocket and a good station wagon to carry him from one project to the next.

My Panamint Acquaintances in the 1930s and 1940s

RUSS JOURNIGAN

When Russ Journigan was a boy, he spent his holidays helping his father, Roy, build and run the Gold Bottom Mill in Emigrant Canyon in the Panamint Range. After getting bitten by the gold bug, Russ put in the first cyanide extracting process in the Panamints at the Tucki Mine.

During the 1930s and '40s, I had lots of acquaintances, but very few friends. It seemed that everyone who lived in the Panamints was trying to make a living and didn't have much time for socializing. Since I was young in those days, most of my acquaintances were older men; very few women were in the hills at the time. The players in this drama did, however, have a common bond in trying to make a living in a hostile environment with a very large stage and few humans per square mile.

During one summer in the '30s, I worked for the County of Inyo in the Road Department as a "pebble picker." I worked behind an Adams motor-grader throwing rocks out of the dirt roads across Panamint Valley. This was one hot job! In July the temperatures never got below 110 degrees for the day's high for two weeks straight, and it didn't take long for me to find out why the previous pebble picker had quit and I got the job! Now, since I was under age, I had trouble getting paid by the County, but when my dad called John Lubkin, the County Supervisor friend of his from Lone Pine, I got my paycheck! They could not get anyone else to do that job during the hot summer.

One redeeming factor, while throwing out rocks, was that sometimes in the distance you could see a car or truck coming by observing the long dust plume that was made while driving on the dusty, sandy road. As a kid and being alone, I would get excited and wonder who it might be. In those days, during the summer, there were no tourists driving the sandy roads, and practically everyone traveling was a prospector, a miner, or a Park Service Ranger. Everyone would stop and talk to me, and

this is how I made my acquaintances. They may have felt sorry for me, I don't know.

C.O. Mittendorf, a mining engineer from Randsburg, came by once going to his mine, the Gold King, just cross from our Gold Bottom Mill in Emigrant Canyon, and he gave me a new cold drink called Pepsi-Cola, in a long bottle that you could get for a nickel. I thanked him for the drink, and he went on to Wildrose Station. I drank the cold Pepsi and got sick and threw up on a greasewood bush! I guess it was the heat.

One of the first persons I met in the Death Valley country was **Sam Ball**, a prospector who lived in a dug out tunnel above Wildrose Station. He had a flowing white beard and a deep vibrant voice. He seemed to have never changed his clothes, but his little home in the short tunnel had some shelving put up to store his canned goods. My father had grubbed staked him on numerous occasions, and he was a good prospector, having located some good gold mines in the Panamints. One always knew when Sam located a claim because his stone monuments were massive with one big rock sitting on top. Some, I'm sure, are still standing. Sam was a well educated man, having graduated from U.C. Berkeley. He had a bad love life and was jilted there and took to the hills for solace. I knew him until he died in his eighties; he is buried at the Lone Pine Cemetery. The Park Service used his dugout in Wildrose Canyon as a powder magazine after his demise.

Ed and Maude Attaway, good friends of Sam Ball, lived mostly in Lone Pine. Ed was a prospector of sorts but didn't like to go out alone much. He was a barber in Lone Pine, and I had him do my hair when it needed it. He was also a bartender at a Lone Pine saloon. He was a drinker, and one time after a binge and losing at poker, he told Rudie Henderson, owner of the Lone Pine Lumber Company, that the experience made a Christian out of him. Ed, however, couldn't decide which church to belong to.

George Griest was the Deputy Sheriff of Inyo County and lived in Wood Canyon on the way to Wildrose Springs. He owned the Argenta Mine, a silver mine in Wood Canyon. He also ran the Adams motor grader and would sit in it and work on the county roads while I was the pebble picker following behind, about a mile back. I didn't mind as this was one of the few jobs I

got paid for. George took over the grader job from Cy Babcock, who owned Wildrose Springs Station. George always drank hot tea when working the grader, and he also always wore a full set of clothes while working in the heat. As a young man, I couldn't understand his reasoning. Maybe because he didn't get sick from heat exhaustion or heat stroke was the answer.

My dad, my Uncle Ed, and I went up to see George one night on our way from Los Angeles up to our mill with supplies. When we got to his house, George came out with a 32-40 rifle and his silver-plated star attached to his nightgown! Later, we all had a big laugh over that incident. George had lots of tales to tell, and he stretched the truth a little bit, but all considered, lonesome George was well respected and served the county well as the Deputy Sheriff. He was also a good mechanic and worked for my father on the night shift at the Gold Bottom Mill. George drove a black four-door Dodge Brothers sedan. He had a spotlight attached on the driver's side, and when he was on official duty, he would attach his red reflector on the spot light.

George once told a story to my Uncle Leslie about hitting a jack rabbit with his car on his way to work at the mill. The next morning, after his shift, driving home, he picked up the dead jack rabbit and the rabbit's head spun around three times. This was a little hard to believe, since there was frost all over the place. This story carried down through the family as one of George's hard-to-believe stories.

Cy Babcock was neither a prospector nor a miner. He was a proprietor and ran the cafe, bar, and gasoline station, and rented out cabins, at Wildrose Spring. Sometimes, he worked on the motor-grader for Inyo County. One time he went to Argus, a suburb of Trona, and met some friends of his at this bar. After a few drinks, he got into his county truck and went back to work, just above the county line.

At that time, the road was oiled from Trona to the lime quarry. His job that day was to do some line striping on the oiled road. There were many large dips on this part of the road and you couldn't always see the lime trucks coming from the quarry. Instead of painting a double line on these dips, Cy painted large question marks in the middle of the road approaching these dips! Sounded like a good idea to him. I am not sure whether it was

heat exhaustion or the bubbly that made him choose this course of action. Anyway, those question marks never wore off the oiled road, and every time I drove to Trona or Los Angeles, I thought of Cy Babcock and the large question marks on the road—and laughed!

Death Valley Scotty visited my father on numerous occasions at the Gold Bottom Mill in Emigrant Canyon on his way to or from Lone Pine. As I remember, he had a Marmin car or a Pierce Arrow, I don't know which. Much is written about Scotty. He had a habit of buying his groceries in Lone Pine and then pulling out a one-hundred dollar bill to pay for the supplies. In those days, none of the merchants could make change for the one-hundred dollar bill so Scotty would take off with the merchandise without paying for it! The merchants all got together and pooled their money, and the next time Scotty came to town, they made change for his one-hundred dollar bill, and Scotty was mad as hell about it! Scotty was a blow hard, but my father put up with all of this even though they were not the best of friends, but they had common interests: GOLD.

I have been told by reliable sources that when Scotty worked the Bullfrog Mine at Rhyolite as a mucker, much gold was "highgraded" when Scotty hollowed out pick handles and put the rich gold ore in the pick handle. He had a "deal" with the blacksmith up on top, who would unload the pick handle when the pick had to be sent up to be resharpened. The Bullfrog was so rich in gold that the owner, Bob Montgomery, didn't much care about the highgrading, and Scotty was not the only one doing it. [1] Scotty had shown my dad some rich, gold-laden ore that he carried with him, so not all of Scotty's gold came from his millionaire friend Albert Johnson! Stories were told by reliable mining engineers that when the vein would pinch down from a three-foot vein to one-quarter-inch in width that the vein would be practically solid gold in composition. The miners were digging out the rich stuff with knife blades!

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[1] A mucker is a roust-about with more brawn than brains who works behind the miner sorting waste rock from good ore and "mucks" with a shovel. He loads the sortings into ore cars or hoist buckets to get the rock our of the mine.

Judge W.B. Gray lived in Beatty, Nevada, and became very interested in the Gold Bottom Mill that my father was constructing in 1935. Judge Gray owned the Skidoo Mine after winning a litigation suit in 1916. Because the eight-inch water line was taken out during World War I, which provided water to the Skidoo 15-stamp mill, Judge Gray was left with no water to run his mine. The Gold Bottom Mill provided custom milling for the Skidoo Mine. My father entered into an agreement with Judge Gray, along with his son Howard from Ely, Nevada, and his wife Helen Gray, who also owned part of the Skidoo Mine, that the Grays were to provide the ore from Skidoo and we would truck it to the mill to custom mill it. A number of workers were hired by Judge Gray along with some lesees, to help feed ore to our mill.

Judge Gray was a fine old man when I knew him, and his son, Howard, became the Attorney General for the State of Nevada in future years.

Charlie Walker, also a resident of Beatty, Nevada, was a prospector, mining engineer, assayer, and underground surveyor. Charlie was one of the original locators of Tucki No. 1 that my father and I owned, along with the Tucki Mine. Judge Gray hired Charlie to do the assaying and the underground surveying at the Skidoo Mine. I do remember his beautiful, India-inked drawings on linen paper of the underground workings.

His assays did not always agree with my father's assays taken from the same samples of the Skidoo ore. Charlie had a habit of not cleaning out his assay crusher and pulverizer after crushing each sample, which would "salt" the next sample crushed. This was especially true when the previous sample was rich in gold content. This salting would give a greater gold content to the next sample, which would be in error. My father always insisted, when I learned fire assaying, that it was absolutely essential that the sample-grinding equipment be thoroughly cleaned between each sample.

Charlie once scared my mother severely when she was alone with my sister, Frances, and me at the mill. About 10 P.M., some head lights were seen coming up Emigrant Canyon from Death Valley. My father was off to Los Angeles to pick up some chemicals at C.F. Braun Company in Alhambra, when a model T pickup truck finally pulled up to the mill; we could see that it

was Charlie Walker, drunk, having come from Beatty on his way to Skidoo. I don't know how he ever made it! Anyway, he got out of his pickup with a whisky bottle in his hand and offered my mother a drink. My mother refused, and Charlie remarked, "There isn't a woman in Beatty who would refuse a drink from Charlie Walker!" We were all scared to death, but Charlie stumbled back to his pick-up, got in and drove on up to the Skidoo Mine. I guess he made it OK, since we saw him later.

Charlie was small in stature but made up for it in talk. He had a large nose, and his nose always dripped. It could have been from breathing all the dust from the mines since there was a lot of silica in the Panamint mines, and dust respirators were unheard of in those days.

Walter Hoover, prospector-miner when I first knew him, started out with E.B. Starr when they both put in a small mill just below Upper Emigrant Springs. The mill was unsuccessful but the stone work can still be seen. It should be noted here that Walter was the world record holder for the single scull boat. The Olympics were held on the Thames River in London, England, circa 1906, and Walter showed me the picture taken at the finish line where he was many boat lengths ahead of the second place sculler. Walter was a powerful man, which helped him in his mining activities. He was one of the few men I knew who took his wife with him while doing his mining in the Panamints. A baby was born to them in a small tin shack at the Skidoo town, when there were only three shacks remaining at the town site.

My mother, having found out about the birth, and being a registered nurse, helped them as best she could. We sent them a case of canned Pet Milk, on our truck going to Skidoo for a load of ore, to help the new mother. I'm sure they appreciated our help. As I remember, the mother was short in stature and of Italian decent. Walter, having graduated from a mid-western university was excellent in preparing mineral location forms, but he never hit it big in the Death Valley mining districts. He later resided in Lone Pine and was on the Olympic Committee for sculling.

George Cook was an extraordinary miner and was the only miner I knew who worked when Skidoo first was discovered. He told me about the famous murder and hanging at Skidoo. He was

very dependable and was asked by the mine superintendent to look for some people who had lost their way coming across Death Valley trying to find the entrance to Emigrant Canyon. The canyon entrance is not easily seen coming up from the Valley. George took some horses and a two wheel wagon and went out to look for them. He found them both dead from thirst at Black Butte, about three miles from the entrance to Emigrant Canyon. If they could have just found the entrance, they could have gotten water at Emigrant Spring. George roped the bodies to the wagon and took them up to Skidoo.

George was a religious man and a straight shooter. He always took his wife with him when he was in the mining business, and he lived in a small shack with her near the "D" Tunnel at the Skidoo Mine when he was a lesee. His ore was always of high quality when we milled it at the Gold Bottom Mill. He also mined at the Monte Christo Mine at Mammoth Lakes and told me that this was the most dangerous mine he had ever worked in. The mine was "wet" from all the snow, and during the winters he stayed at Tamarack Lodge at Twin Lakes as a watchman. George and his wife spent their later years in Lone Pine, and I visited him many times on my way to Mammoth Lakes to fish.

George Sutherlen was also interested in mining, and even though he was a graduate electrical engineer, he did a lot of mining at the Minnietta Mine in the Argus Range. His father was a superintendent for Standard Oil Company, and Standard Oil was interested at one time in purchasing the Minnietta.

George was an amateur radio operator (W6DUF) and got me interested in amateur radio, where I became licensed (W60KJ). Since there were no cell phones in those days and no telephone systems, amateur radio came in handy in cases of emergency. George went to Saudi Arabia as a communications expert for ARAMCO and erected radio stations to communicate with the New York Corporate Office. After his tenure in Arabia he moved back to the Navel Ordinance Test Station at China Lake where he was the Range Officer. George never got gold mining out of his blood, and we talked about mining via amateur radio on many occasions. George and I set up a station at the Gold Bottom Mill and my father got perturbed when we burnt out a

four cylinder Kohler electric generator running radio equipment. In later life George enjoyed taking his friends on mining and prospecting excursions through the Panamints to see the old mill, Skidoo, and the Tucki Mine, and much has been published about these trips.

Fred Davis was from Beatty, Nevada, and became a blacksmith at the Skidoo Mine. When we were running the ore from Skidoo for Judge Gray, I would go up to get a load from the "D" Tunnel and help him turn the blower by hand to keep the coals hot for sharpening drill steel. Fred gave me the first silver dollar I ever owned and I sure was pleased. It's a Morgan dollar minted in Carson City, Nevada, and I still have that dollar. The last time I went to Skidoo, you could still see the "clinkers" from the blacksmith furnace there at the "D" Tunnel.

Jack Stewart was a gold miner who worked as a lesee at the Skidoo Mine when my dad owned the property. He was a mean spirited man. A stray dog came around his camp searching for food and became a pest. Jack said, "I'll fix that dog." Jack wrapped a stick of dynamite around the dog's middle and "spit" the fuse. The dog, confused and scared from the smoke and noise coming out of the fuse, ran under Jack's house and blew his house up! Most of the other miners who lived in the camp said it served him right, and no one volunteered to help him rebuild his house. Wood was hard to come by in the desert and it took Jack a week to repair the damage from the blast. Of course, the dog was killed.

Speaking of dogs, C.O. Mittendorf had a black Scotch terrier who loved to dig up rattlesnakes in rat holes. In the process, the dog would get bitten on occasion, and that dog would get so sick with a swollen nose that he would lay under the kitchen table and just about die! This, however, never stop him from digging up rattlesnakes!

Speaking of other pets, we had a long haired cat called Blue when we were operating the mill in Emigrant Canyon. Blue used to lie on the railing where the wide flat belt from the engine went up to the jack shaft. Being in a dry climate, the belt would generate static electricity when the mill was operating, and Blue would intentionally direct his tail over near the belt to pick up the static charge. The hair on his whole body would stand on

end, and old Blue just loved to do that! One day Blue was sleeping in the sun on the ore truck seat. My Uncle Ed had to go get a load of ore from the Tucki Mine and old Blue got out of the seat and under the truck tire. Uncle Ed didn't know it, and when he drove the truck off, old Blue was run over. We all felt bad about the demise of old Blue.

Wayne "Bud" Journigan, my cousin, had a German shepherd he called Tucki (after our mine). He was a real good dog and a purebred from the dogs the Ed Journigan family raised when they lived in La Habra, California. German shepherds were good watch dogs, and no one ever gave us any trouble at the Gold Bottom Mill, even though at times, we had high values of gold bullion and cyanide-zinc concentrates at the mill prior to shipping to the U.S. Mints in San Francisco or Denver.

In the 1930s, my father, **Roy Journigan,** owned the Tucki Mine on Tucki Mountain. Before he built the Gold Bottom Mill in Emigrant Canyon (with the help of several family members), some of the Tucki ore was processed in a device called an "arrastre" at Telephone Spring. **Ike Steinberger**, a friend of my dads, operated this crude machine of Mexican origin. Ike's company was called Hell's Garden Mining Company, and the logo on his letterhead read, "The Mills of the Gods Grind Slowly, But Exceedingly Fine"! I always remembered that statement. The arrastre consisted of a circular stone tank with a flat, stone-lined bottom with the stones cemented together to hold an ore-laden pulp. A series of drag-rocks were connected by chains to gears driven by a vertical, single cylinder, 15-hp Fairbanks Morse diesel engine furnished by my father. Ike allowed us to process the Tucki ore free of charge. The ore was fed into the arrastre, and the drag-rocks moving around in a circular fashion ground up the ore. The sand settled to the bottom where pure mercury was added as needed to amalgamate the gold from the ore. There were no amalgam plates, just the flat stone bottom. Needless to say, this was a very inefficient operation, but we had no other place close by to process the ore. We needed the money from selling the amalgam to help pay for food and labor to continue the development of the mine until the Gold Bottom Mill was built in 1934.

There was not enough water at Telephone Spring to support a larger mill or my father would have built it there, being only eight miles from the Tucki Mine. The old arrastre is still at Telephone Spring but has since been damaged, I guess by persons trying to get some remaining gold that may have become lodged in between the cemented rocks in the bottom.

The arrastre originally was used to process ore from the Saddle Rock Mine, a very rich brown ore of a volcanic texture with "wire gold" strung through it—some of the most beautiful "picture rock" I had ever seen. **Ralph Merritt** owned that mine and was also a good friend of my father. His mine was located about three miles up Telephone Canyon from Telephone Spring on the trail to Skidoo where the telephone line had been constructed from Rhyolite to Skidoo in 1907.[2]

In the late 1940s I met **Harry Merrick**, a commercial photographer from Long Beach, and his family accompanied us on many trips to the Tucki Mine to do their share of road work in order to get to the mine so that we could all camp. Assessment work had to be done yearly to hold the unpatented mining claims. This work was burdensome but somewhat fun to do. We were usually accompanied by friends who went along to help us. This covered a period in the '50s and '60s, and the families enjoyed the outings during those times. The Merricks usually slept in campers, and the Journigans slept in the old bunk house with the trade rats that would keep us awake all night.[3]

Because the Tucki Mine was in such a remote location, we didn't have many visitors. Most people would not know what road to take to get up there.

One day, I looked up and saw an airplane flying over the camp. It was Harry Merrick in his Cessna 170. He dropped a

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[2] Ralph Palmer Merritt was a '49er President and Director of Manzanar during World War II, as well as a friend of President Herbert Hoover.

[3] "Trade rats" were large desert rats that frequented most of the mining camps in the Panamints. They stole food or bright colored objects like money, and took the loot back to a rat hole, then return to the scene of the crime with a bunch of pebbles or pieces of brush to complete the "trade." One night we lost a whole box of cherries and wondered why the dog was barking so much.

small parachute made of a handkerchief, and on the end was a 35 mm film container that had a message inside telling us to come down and meet him at the Stovepipe Wells airstrip. What a surprise! We jumped in the truck and went down to meet him.

My father had always thought that the Tucki Gold Mine showed promise, and because I had caught the "Gold Bug" back in the late '30s working as a kid at Skidoo, Tucki, and Journigan's Gold Bottom Mill, my mind started going over the idea of starting a modernized cyanide processing plant at the Tucki. I became the first gold mine operator in California to install an active carbon cyanide processing plant, having built the plant at the Tucki Mine in 1973.

My wife **Lee Journigan** and I stayed out at the Tucki Mine in the 1970s most of the time alone. Lee did the crushing and the cooking and I ran the front loader, did the chemistry and assaying, and fixed the equipment when it broke down.

One day Lee and I came in with provisions for the Tucki camp and ran into a summer cloud burst. We did manage to get across Emigrant Wash, but in Sheep Wash the water and rocks were cascading down the canyon with such force that I decided to get the truck onto higher ground to keep us from getting washed away. We left the truck and hoofed up to the mine, a distance of about eight miles, to get the BOBCAT so we could come back and get the provisions left in the truck (including some un-refrigerated meat).

When we got to camp it was dark and still raining heavily. I put Lee in the bucket of the BOBCAT holding a flashlight since the BOBCAT didn't have headlights, and she pointed out our way until there was no more road that we could make out. The whole canyon had changed its contour with new rocks replacing our washed-out road. Water and rocks were coming out of the upper side-canyons and flowing into Sheep Wash. To make things worse, the batteries went out on the flashlight, and the only light we had was from lightning flashes, which helped us a little.

We finally got back to the truck and loaded the supplies into the bucket of the BOBCAT along with Lee's cosmetic case. We left the truck there since the water had not receded, and we would have a better chance of making our way with a four-wheel

drive BOBCAT than with a pick-up truck. So we came back in the front loader with Lee hanging in the bucket with the supplies.

The lightning was so bad that the large-meshed screen that covered the top of the loader became charged, and sparks were flying in all directions to get to the ground. I kept telling Lee not to worry as we were on rubber tires insulated from the wet ground—but I wondered! When we finally got back to the mine it was just before daybreak and the bed felt good after that long night.

On the way back to the mine in the dark, Lee's cosmetic case had fallen out of the bucket, and I had run over the case. The next day we found it all smashed up when we went back to get the truck after the storm had subsided. Lee was not too happy about her loss.

We had known **Pete Aguereberry** for a long time. He was a very neat man and his camp was as neat as a pin. He cut his own hair and was always clean shaven. Much has been written about him, and looking back to our acquaintance with him, in addition to his neatness, he was somewhat suspicious of most people. When we were running his ore at the Gold Bottom Mill, he would always drive his model A Ford pickup from Harrisburg Flat down to our mill to watch his ore go through. I guess he wanted to make sure that we weren't going to screw him out of anything. We didn't mind him checking us out, as he was always a gentleman when he visited us at the mill.

My father one day asked Pete how much he wanted for his mine, and he said $100,000 cash. I am sure that if you had given him $50,000 in gold he would have taken it. He had worked his mine for about forty years, and most of the underground activities he performed by hand using the "single jack" method of drilling holes for powder. Later in his life, his nephew, Ambrois Aguereberry, talked him into getting an air compressor and a jack hammer to do the drilling. I can say one thing about Pete: His underground mining work was as orderly as he lived his life on top. I have never been in a mine so neat. Not a rock out of place! The ore from Pete's mine was more complex, compared to other free-milling ores in the area, and thus it was more difficult to run, as it had some sulfides in it that hindered the recovery.

I had the pleasure of working, as a mucker, with a miner named **Buck Johnson** at the Skidoo Mine. He was a wild man but had a kind heart. He was an excellent miner and really knew how to do selective mining when it was necessary to follow small veins to get the good ore without diluting it with waste rock. He would sometimes use a rubber mat when blasting to catch the good rock and separate the wall rock (waste rock).

I miss Buck. I know he drank a lot and got in a lot of fights, but he was the best miner that I ever worked for. He made fortunes and lost fortunes, all in the mining business. Later, in the 1960s, Matt Ryan, a Ranger for the Park Service stationed at the Emigrant Ranger Station and a good friend of our family, told me that he once found Buck on the top of Towne Pass. He had fallen asleep, or passed out, driving his old red pickup with no doors on it and fell out on the ground. The lights were still on and the ignition key was on, but the engine had stalled and the truck was in the middle of the road. Matt said he was sure that if Buck hadn't been all liquored up, he probably would have frozen to death because there was snow all over the ground and it was cold. Matt finally shook him to see if he was alive. Buck awoke, and Matt put him in the car and drove him to Panamint Springs where he could thaw out.

Buck once went to Beatty and touched off a stick of dynamite in front of the Red Rooster, a house of ill repute, and blew the windows out of the front of the place. He was thrown in jail for disturbing the peace, but Judge Gray released him. On another occasion, Buck went to Beatty with his pack burro and allowed the burro to munch on some green grass near the Amargosa River. Later, he arrived in Beatty with the beast and brought the burro into the dance hall. The burro evidently got diarrhea from eating the green grass that he was not used to and proceeded to defecate all over the dance floor. The owners ran the burro and Buck out of the dance hall, and Buck just about got thrown in jail for that too!

Later on during World War II, Buck wanted to join the Marines, but he was 45 years old and too old for the Marines. He wrote a letter to President Roosevelt explaining that he was a good powder man and knew explosives. The President made a

special dispensation to allow him to join the Marines. He had no trouble in boot camp, since physically he was as tough as nails!

When Buck died, I noticed that he didn't have a grave marker in the Lone Pine Cemetery, so I called the Veterans Administration to find out if we could get some sort of marker for his grave. It was then that I found out he had been awarded the Silver Star. The citation read, in effect, that when the Marines landed on the Island of Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands some of the amphibious tanks got stuck on the reef, due to a low tide the leaders hadn't counted on, and Buck was instructed to go out in a Higgins Boat, alone, with a load of dynamite explosives. Buck blew a big hole in the reef to allow the tanks to come in to complete the landing. He got the Silver Star for that and he never told me, nor anyone else that I knew, about the incident; I had to find it out from the Veterans Administration.

I learned a lot from Buck, even being a mucker, and we remained good friends until he passed away. He lived his life his own way and never seemed to be too stressed out by what life had given him. I guess that's why I liked him so much from the early years of Tucki and Skidoo to the later years, when he still had the dream.

These people represent a few acquaintances of mine while I lived in the Panamints, and I've added some memories of when I owned the Tucki Mine on Tucki Mountain. Some of these men became my mentors. If I were to select one person from all my acquaintances during the '30s and '40s, I would select the old prospector, Sam Ball. I used to listen to him by the hour in his old cave in Wildrose Canyon. It wasn't until later that I discovered he was a formally educated man and found out still later that he was a Bootlegger, but this didn't stop me from learning a lot about life from him. He became one of my chief mentors: However, I didn't become a Bootlegger!